THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

The Story of Hai bin Yaqzan

Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Tufail

Translated by Dr. Riad Kocache

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The Story of Hai bin Yaqzan

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The Story of Hai bin Yaqzan

As told by

ABU BAKR MUHAMMAD BIN TUFAIL

A New Translation by

RIAD KOCACHE, Ph.D.

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FOREWORD

Ibn Tufail, or to give him his full name, Abu Bakr bin Abd al-Malik bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Tufail al-Qaisi, was born about 1100 A.D. in a small town named Wadi Ash (today called Guadix) north-east of Granada. Because of his first name, he became known in the West as Abubacer.

He was a man of many gifts, philosopher, mathematician and poet, as well as being highly qualified in medicine, which he both practised and taught. His best known pupil was Ibn Rushd (Averroës), whose works exerted a great influence upon both Jewish and Christian thinkers. Ibn Tufail himself held a succession of posts as adviser and court physician, first at the court of Granada and later at the court of Prince Abu Sa'd Yusuf, Sultan of the Muwahidin, in Morocco. He died in Marrakesh in 1185 A.D.

There is evidence that Ibn Tufail wrote extensively on medicine and philosophy, on astronomy and mathematics, and that he wrote poetry as well as the romance which is here translated. Of this considerable output, only *The Story of Hai bin Yaqzan* survives, apart from some fragments of poetry. Such is the extraordinary character of this work that it has been accorded through the centuries an importance quite remarkable for a composition of relatively few pages, and it has, like a precious stone of the first water, been seen in many different lights by commentators. The Arabic text of the story is to be found in a number of manuscripts, of which the one held in the Bodleian Library at Oxford is among the most complete and reliable. There have been a number of editions of the text and one of these, based on the Bodleian manuscript, was largely responsible for bringing the work to the notice of scholars in Europe. In 1671, Edward Pocock, Jr., published in Oxford the Arabic text with his own translation into Latin. Several editions of this work appeared in the years from 1671 to 1700, and it provided the basis for two English translations, one by George Keith, a Quaker scholar, in 1674 and a second by

George Ashwell in 1686. The first English translation to be made from the Arabic text, not from Pocock's Latin version, was published by Simon Ockley in 1708. The work was translated into Hebrew in the 14th century and in the 18th and 19th centuries there were translations into Dutch, German, French and Spanish.

Ibn Tufail's *Story* is itself based on a previous work by Ibn Sina (Avicenna). It relates the history of an infant, a princess's son whose birth has to be concealed, who is cast ashore upon an equatorial island, is suckled by a doe and spends the first fifty years of his life without contact with other human beings. His life in isolation is composed of seven stages of seven years each during which, by his own efforts, he progresses in knowledge of himself and of the universe which surrounds him. From the dependence of childhood he proceeds to the active phase of adolescence and manhood, until the death of the doe brings him face to face with the problem of what life is and what may lie behind superficial reality. Through the solution of his practical problems and through the study of a wide range of phenomena, from the anatomy and physiology of the animals to the movements of the heavenly bodies, he is led to the concepts of the soul and of the Creator, and is able eventually to make the leap from the intellectual apprehension of truth to the inner, intuitive experience of Reality.

At this point chance brings a man of his own age to the island and as a result Hai undergoes his first experience of life within a human community. The visitor is Asal, a spiritually inclined and devout man who comes seeking the solitude that may favour the contemplation of the truth which he too has reached by intellectual means. Hai and Asal become aware of the complete congruence of the views that they have arrived at, each in his own way, though Asal is without the inner experience which Hai has achieved. Asal also describes the working of organized religion in his homeland and this inspires in Hai the wish to bring to the human community the knowledge of the Truth which he has experienced. The chance arrival of a ship gives the opportunity for both men to visit Asal's island where the conventional approach to spirituality prevails under the rule of Asal's friend, Salaman. Hai's preaching to the islanders serves but to bring home to him that the experience of Truth must come from within and that, though there may be a few for whom this experience is possible, for the majority of human

beings religion is a social rather than a spiritual necessity. Hai and Asal thereupon depart once more to resume the contemplative life.

Commentators concerned with the history and development of philosophy have seen Ibn Tufail's work as in some measure a refutation of al-Ghazali's 'Destruction of the Philosophers', with its insistence upon the primacy of intuitive knowledge and the importance of the mystical experience of Truth. It is clear from a reading of *Hai bin Yaqzan*, however, that Ibn Tufail gave the utmost weight to intuitive knowledge and mystical experience, and he indeed begins his own introduction to the story by emphasizing this point. The view which he is at pains to develop, and this he also stresses in the introduction, is that knowledge of the Truth gained through the intellect and reason does not contradict what is apprehended through inner experience. The latter adds a vital dimension to knowledge, one of vividness and joy which cannot be communicated in words and obliges anyone who attempts to convey it to have recourse to metaphor.

Ibn Tufail's protagonist, the 'Self-Taught Philosopher' as he is called in Pocock's Latin translation, has been viewed variously as exemplifying the philosopher's *tabula rasa*, as embodying Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* and as the forerunner of Rousseau's 'noble savage'. These associations add little to our appreciation of Ibn Tufail's masterpiece or of the objectives which he clearly had in mind; if one is looking for 'modern' ideas in his work, there are much more striking examples to be found. His description of Hai's dissection of animals betrays a truly modern understanding of the circulation of the blood some centuries before Harvey's day; he deals continually with features of ontological development which imply a recapitulation of phylogenesis and his ideas on adaptation would have fitted well into the Darwinian framework; most striking of all, perhaps, he specifies in Hai's acquisition of knowledge the use of modern 'scientific' method involving the observation of facts, the forming of hypotheses to account for the facts and the return to further observation to test the hypotheses.

The most pronounced echo of Ibn Tufail's romance in the succeeding centuries is to be found, without a doubt, in 'Robinson Crusoe'. Ockley's English translation of 'Hai bin Yaqzan' was first published in 1708 and in 1719 Defoe brought out his 'Life and Strange Adventures of Robinson Crusoe'. It is true that

Defoe's contemporaries saw the source of his novel in the experiences of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish mariner who passed over four years in solitude on one of the Juan Fernandez islands, and it is quite possible that Defoe himself met Selkirk. The Selkirk story was, however, no more than the topical peg on which Defoe proceeded to hang his work of imagination. His tale is so convincing that it was widely believed among people of his time to be a factual account of Selkirk's adventures, as witness the case of a certain Alderman Tawney of Oxford who used to read the novel once a year, believing it to be true. When disabused by a friend, he reproached his informant bitterly for having deprived him of one of the greatest pleasures of his old age. This preference for entertainment over truth might have gratified Defoe the writer, but it would not have won the approval of the thinker and moralist that Defoe shows himself to be in his series of books on the Robinson Crusoe theme; still less would it have found favour with Ibn Tufail's protagonist.

The parallels between 'Robinson Crusoe' and 'Hai bin Yaqzan' are many and striking enough to make it probable that Defoe was acquainted with the Moslem work. Crusoe does not begin as the *tabula rasa* that Hai provides, but his solitude teaches him many lessons, first through the solution of the myriad practical problems which face him in his struggle for survival, solutions which are yielded only by the attentive study of the natural world in which he finds himself, the climate and the weather, the vegetation and the animals with whom he shares his island; second, through the realization of the psychological problems which solitude presents to one accustomed to human society, difficulties which must inevitably overwhelm him until the exhaustion of despair brings the quietude in which the voice of conscience can be heard and the presence of the Creator can be sensed. When his first visitor, Man Friday, arrives, Robinson Crusoe finds himself obliged to pass on, though in conditions very different from those experienced by Hai, some of the lessons he has learned. Much of this may strike the reader as no more than the moralizing to be expected of the 18th century Puritan mind, but there is a strong indication that more lies behind it in the third volume of Defoe's writing on the Robinson Crusoe theme, 'Serious Reflections during the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, with his Vision of the Angelic World'. Here, speaking still through the *persona* of Robinson Crusoe, he discusses a

range of moral, religious and philosophical questions, some of them in the light of experiences which, though in the recounting they fall far short of Hai bin Yaqzan's, nonetheless partake of the same nature.

INTRODUCTION

The author's introduction to the story of Hai bin Yaqzan is concerned principally with the comparison of two approaches to Truth, the preparatory and the experiential, graphically characterized elsewhere in the interchange between Avicenna and Abu Said:

'When the philosopher and the Sufi met, Avicenna said:

"What I know, he sees."

Abu Said remarked:

"What I see, he knows."'*

Ibn Tufail begins by describing the experience of Truth as the perception of a totally different world, a state of such joy and happiness that one cannot keep it secret yet cannot find words to describe it. Those with little intellectual capacity may experience this state and talk about it with little comprehension; others with more intellectual knowledge may achieve a degree of mystical union by their own efforts. By repetition, the state may be prolonged and may occur in daily life (i.e., not during periods of devotion), till it becomes a familiar experience. At this stage, the seeker is conscious of Truth and of the self. In the succeeding stage, he becomes unconscious of the self and aware only of the Holy.

There are two groups of seekers: those who deduce the Truth by intellectual means and those who experience it. Consider, as an analogy, the case of a person of high intelligence born blind. He learns to recognize objects, places and people and to name colours by association with objects. If his sight were to be suddenly restored, he would find no disparity between his former picture and what he now sees, but there would be two additional elements: an enhancement of clarity and a great feeling of pleasure.

Intellectuals who have not reached the stage of *wilayah.* (knowledge of the essence of Truth by direct experience) are like the blind man. Those who have reached this state are like

* Idries Shah, *The Way of the Sufi,* London, 1968, p. 220.

the blind man with sight restored. When the conceptions of philosophers are accurate, there is a correspondence between their account and that of the seeker who has reached the stage of *wilayah*. What is experienced by the people of vision (*wilayah*) cannot be expressed in words. The subject can be treated and defined as the philosophers do, but this is rarely done correctly, and those who come near the Truth have to have recourse to analogy and metaphor.

Truth can be reached by research and reflection, and through a brief taste of experience. To follow the path takes time and requires the seeker to undertake the art with all his will and energy, and an absence of preoccupation. It is as an aid to the seeker that the author tells the story of Hai bin Yaqzan—Alive, son of Awake.

THE STORY OF HAI BIN YAQZAN

Our virtuous ancestors—may Allah be pleased with them—have described a certain island of India which lies below the equator. Since this island has the fairest climate on Earth and is most advantageously sited and prepared to receive the supreme light, human beings can be formed there without parents.

On this island, called by Al Masaudi[1] The Island of Waq Waq,[2] a tree is to be found which bears women as its fruit.

The view that the Island of Waq Waq has the best of all climates is contrary to the view of philosophers and physicians who claim that the Fourth Region has the fairest weather of all. If the philosophers make this claim for the Fourth Region because they believe that some geographical condition makes human habitation along the Equator impossible, then their point of view may be valid. But if they say that the Fourth Region is the fairest on Earth because—and most of them do so declare—they believe that what lies along the Equator is unbearably hot, then this is a fallacy easy to disprove.

It has been shown by the natural sciences that the causes of heat are motion or contact with hot bodies or illumination. The natural scientists have also found that polished, non-transparent bodies accept illumination best, followed by dense, non-polished bodies. Transparent bodies of low density do not under any circumstances accept light. These findings are due to Sheikh Abu Ali and were not published by any of his predecessors. If these propositions are valid, it follows that the sun does not heat the Earth in the way that hot bodies warm other bodies in contact with them, since the sun is not itself hot.

[1] Abu Al Hasan Bin Al Masaudi was a geographer, traveller and historian who died about 956 A.D.

[2] An island referred to in many stories, said to be situated in the east of the China Sea or above Zanzibar. It was supposed to be inhabited by creatures similar to human beings (females) who cry out 'waq waq' and who drop dead if touched. Other ancient sources mention an Indian tree called the Waq Waq which bears fruit that looks like a human head suspended by the hair.

Neither can motion be the cause of the Earth's heat, since the Earth is stationary, occupying the same position at sunrise as it did at sunset. It is obvious to the senses, however, that the Earth warms up at sunrise and cools down at sunset.

Nor can it be a question of the air receiving warmth from the sun and transmitting this to the Earth by contact. How could this be so when we find that during the hot period, the air nearest the Earth is hotter than the air higher up? This leaves us with illumination as the only means by which the sun heats the Earth. Heat is always associated with light, as we discover if we concentrate light in a concave mirror and observe that it will set fire to what is near it.

Science has shown convincingly that the sun and the Earth are both spherical, the size of the sun being greater than the size of the Earth. Thus half of the Earth's surface is always receiving illumination from the sun, the point of maximum illumination being at the centre of this area, since this point is farthest from darkness and faces a larger section of the sun. Places on the Earth towards the circumference receive less light and this shades off into darkness when we reach the periphery of the circle which is out of the sun's illumination.

A place on the Earth is at the centre of illumination when the sun is at its zenith exactly overhead, heat being then at its maximum. At a great distance from such a place, the cold would be very great indeed.

Astronomy has ascertained that places on the Equator have the sun directly overhead only twice a year, in the sign of the Ram and the sign of the Balance. For the rest of the year, the sun is to the south for six months and to the north for six months. People in these areas avoid both excessive heat and excessive cold and enjoy a uniform climate.

This subject requires further explanation but this is not what we set out to do. We have brought it to your attention because it is one of the factors which confirms the truth of what has been said about the possibility of human formation, in certain regions, without parents.

Some sources claim that Hai bin Yaqzan was one of those formed without parents. Others deny this and simply relate what we shall now tell you.

Near the island we spoke of there was another island, very large, fruitful and well populated. This island was owned and ruled over by an extremely proud and jealous man. This king

had a sister of exquisite charm and beauty whom he forbade to marry because he had still to find someone he considered worthy and equal. The king also had a relative called Yaqzan and this man married the king's sister in secret but nonetheless lawfully, according to the rules of their sect.

Later she bore Yaqzan a son but fearing that her secret could no longer be kept, she suckled the child for the last time and placed him in a little coffin which she sealed all round. Then, her heart burning with love and with fear for the child, she took him to the seashore accompanied by a group of servants and intimates whom she trusted. There she bade him farewell, saying: 'Oh God who has created this child from nothing, sustained him in the darkness of the womb and looked after him till he was completely formed, to you I surrender him now, praying that he may receive Your bounty, because of my fear for this stubborn, mighty and unjust king. Be with him and abandon him not, O most Merciful.'

She then cast him into the sea. The tide was high and the strong current carried the child to the coast of the aforementioned island. It so happened that this night had the highest tide of the year and the force of the waves carried the coffin into a wood normally well clear of the sea. The wood was thick with trees, standing in good soil, sheltered from wind and rain and bending the sun's rays gently at sunrise and sunset.

The tide receded, leaving the coffin wedged in the trees. The wind now blew the sand till it built up, forming a barrier which would prevent further access to the sea, even at the highest tide. The nails holding the planks of the coffin together had been loosened when the waves threw it into the wood and the child inside being now hungry began to move and cry. His cries were heard by a doe who had lost her fawn—the fawn had ventured out of its shelter and been carried off by an eagle—and the doe thought the child's cries were the cries of her lost fawn.

The doe traced the sound and standing up with her front hooves on the coffin, she dislodged one of the planks, while the child moaned and groaned inside. The doe bent over the child and comforted him, then succeeded in suckling him with her delicious milk. From then on, she took charge of the child, caring for him and protecting him.

Those who reject the idea of spontaneous generation claim that this is how the child started his life. We will content ourselves by describing how he grew up and progressed to high

achievement.

Those who claim that he was generated from the earth, describe a belt of low land on the island where mud has fermented, through the passage of time, in such a way that the hot and the cold, the humid and the dry, have blended so as to reach equilibrium. This stretch of mud, they say, is very large and some parts of it, being more bland, have a higher capacity for forming tissue than other parts. The middle section was mildest and had the closest similarity to the human temperament.

This mud, owing to its extreme viscosity, bubbled like boiling water and one bubble was formed, divided into two parts by a thin membrane. Each part contained a subtle airy substance possessing certain exceptional qualities of mildness to which the spirit which comes by the command of the Lord[3] could cling, in such a way as to make it impossible to discern—either by the senses or the intellect—that they were separate.

This spirit emanates continuously from Allah, most Glorious and Mighty, and is analogous to the rays of the Sun which continually irradiate the world.

As already mentioned, certain kinds of matter, for example the very transparent gases, are not illuminated by the rays of the sun. Other varieties of matter, the dense and unpolished, for instance, are slightly illuminated and show by their colour the degree to which they have responded to illumination. Polished bodies, mirrors, are so strongly illuminated that if they are made concave in a certain fashion, the excess of illumination is so great that fire can result.

So it is with Spirit which, by command of Allah, Most High, flows continuously to all creation. Some bodies show no sign (of the Spirit) owing to lack of preparation—for example inanimate material like the transparent gases already mentioned. Some, like the plants, show a degree of it, in accordance with their preparation, analogous to the dense bodies mentioned above. Some, responding like polished mirrors, indicate the presence of the Spirit most intensely. Such are the animal species and, just as different grades of matter accept the illumi-

[3] *The Koran*, surat Al Isra (Bani Israil), 85: 'They ask thee concerning the spirit. Say "The spirit (cometh) by command of my Lord. Of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you (O men!)."' An alternative interpretation of 'Amr' (command) is 'an affair'. The above would then be "The spirit is the affair of my Lord".

nation of the sun in different degrees, so some animals exceed others in the extent to which they receive the Spirit and, taking its form, become similar to it. This is particularly the state of man and it was to this that the Prophet—peace be upon him—alluded when he said 'Allah created Adam in His image'.

If the (Spirit) form is strengthened in man so that all other forms vanish within its reality and it remains alone, then the glory of its light ignites all it perceives. This is possible only for the holy prophets—Allah's blessing be upon all of them. This will be outlined in its proper place and we must now return to the account which some have given of the formation (of life).

They relate that when Spirit entered the bubble, as already described, then, by command of Allah, all Powers submitted and bowed down before it. Adjacent to this bubble, another one formed, this one divided into three chambers by thin membranes and connected by ducts. This bubble contained a gas similar to that in the first bubble but of somewhat greater density. In these three chambers, divided out of one, the Powers which had submitted became indwelling, committed to its protection and maintenance in all eventualities and always in relation to the Spirit within the first bubble.

Now, on the other side of the first bubble or cavity, a third cavity was formed. This too contained a gas but one more dense than the gas in the second cavity. In this third cavity also, a group of subservient forces took up occupation and were dedicated to its maintenance and service. These three cavities were the first of all that later formed out of the mud.

All three depended on each other. The first needed the other two because it needed to control and to be served. The second and third cavities felt the need to act as subordinates to a leader; the need, as it were, for an administrator felt by those administered to.

However, in respect of the organs which were later to form, the second and third cavities assumed the relationship of controllers, the second having greater authority than the third.

When Spirit first entered the original cavity, heat was produced and the cavity, moulded by the fire, assumed a pineal shape. A dense fleshy body now began to accrete and this, with a thick sheath around it for protection, took the same shape. It was the organ we call the heart.

Because heat causes loss of humidity and decay, the heart needed an arrangement which would provide it with nourish-

ment and replace what was lost by decay, if its existence was to be of any duration. It also needed the means of sensing what is needed and hence the ability to attract it; likewise a means of realizing what was harmful and the ability to repel this. To meet these needs, one developing organ took over one of these requirements and another organ took over the other, each being energized by the forces originating in the heart.

The brain was the organ which took over the sense function and the liver the organ which provided nourishment. Each of these was able to discharge its function only because the heart provided it with heat and the forces necessary. To allow for transmission of these, routes and channels were necessary, some larger than others as dictated by necessity. Thus veins and arteries came into being.

Those who give this account go on to describe the entire formation in detail much like the description by naturalists of how the embryo develops in the womb. They go on to the point where all the organs were complete and the embryo ready to emerge. In all of this they point to the suitability of the fermenting mud to provide all that is necessary for the formation of a human being, membranes, everything. When the embryo was perfected and complete, the membranes were torn by an action similar to labour and the surrounding mud, which by then was dry, cracked.

The infant cried out when he was hungry and a doe, hearing his calls, responded to the sound.

From this point on both versions of the story agree. They relate that the doe which had undertaken to look after him found good luscious grazing; her flesh became full and her milk so plentiful that she was able to feed the child adequately. She stayed close to him as much as possible, leaving him only to graze. The child became accustomed to her and fond of her and if she were a little late in attending him, he would cry out and she would at once run to him.

There were no carnivorous animals on the island and the child, fed by the milk of the doe, prospered till he was two years of age. By this time his teeth had appeared and he was able to walk so that he could now accompany the doe, who took him to places where ripe fruit had fallen from the trees. If a fruit had a hard shell, she would crack it with her teeth before giving it to him. If he wanted milk, she provided it in plenty. If he was thirsty, she would take him to water. In hot sun she shielded

him with her body and at night when it was cold (they returned at night to the place where she had found him) she would warm him by lying against him and arranging a pile of feathers which had fallen out of the little coffin.

A herd of oryx befriended the pair, accompanying them by day and spending the night near their place of rest. The child of course imitated the sounds the deer made till it was hardly possible to distinguish their voices.

Because he had an intense inborn drive to succeed in all his efforts, he imitated very accurately all the bird calls and animal cries he heard. Most of his imitations however were of deer sounds: crying, befriending, calling to others, defending. Animals have their different sounds for different situations. So the animals got used to him and he to them: they accepted him and he accepted them.

When some object disappeared from his sight, he discovered that he could retain an image of it and he noticed that he sometimes felt an attraction and sometimes a dislike. He also observed that animals seemed to have various kinds of covering like hair or feathers, and he contrasted this with his own nakedness. He observed animals' capacity for running and fighting and the natural weapons they had for their protection like horns, tusks, antlers and claws. He had no natural weapons and when some animals fought with him over some bit of fruit, he had to let them win, as he could neither defend himself nor run away.

He noticed that fawns of his own age grew horns and developed great speed in running. He could detect none of these developments in himself and although he often reflected on this, he could find no explanation. He even searched among injured or deformed animals for any that resembled him but could find none. He observed that animals had fur or hair on their faces and a tail at the other end so that their private parts were covered. This made him feel upset. By the time he was seven he had given up hoping that the things he lacked would grow, so selecting some wide leaves, he arranged them in front and behind, holding them in place with a makeshift belt which he fashioned from grass and palm fibres. It did not take long for the leaves to dry out and crumble, whereupon he replaced them and increased the number of layers in the hope of lengthening their useful life. This also gave a short-lived result.

He made sticks from tree branches after breaking off the ends

to straighten them and get a balance. These he used against the animals and was now able to attack the weaker ones and defend himself against the stronger. With this development his self-esteem increased slightly. He realized his superiority in having hands, since, through them, he had been able to cover his nakedness and make sticks to defend his possessions—thus creating substitutes for the tail and natural weapons he once desired.

Meanwhile, in his seventh year, he was growing up. Increasingly he found it wearisome to keep renewing the leaves that provided his covering and he considered using the tail of a dead animal for this purpose. He had noticed however that animals avoided their dead, even running away from them, and he could not bring himself to go near one until by chance one day he came upon the body of an eagle. This dead eagle had not been shunned by other animals, so he approached it and tore off its wings and tail as whole sections. He then skinned the rest and cut what resulted into two sections. One half he used to cover himself in front, the other behind. The tail he placed on his back and the wings on his upper arms. This kept him warm as well as providing the covering he sought and it also had the effect of making all the other animals afraid of him so that they no longer fought him or opposed him.

From then on, none of the animals came near him with the exception of the doe that had reared him. The two remained inseparable till the doe began to weaken and grow old. When this happened he took on the task of caring for her, leading her to lush pastures and picking sweet fruit for her. With time, however her frailty increased and finally death caught up with her.

All her movements and actions ceased and the boy became frightened when he saw her in this state and was overcome with sorrow. He called to her again and again, using the sound to which she usually responded but he could discern neither movement nor response. He examined her eyes and ears but could see no defect in them. He then went on to examine all her organs but still failed to find any visible defect in any of them. His hope was that he could find some cause of her condition, and, by removing it, restore her to her usual state.

He was led to this line of thought by something he had already noticed; that if he shut his eyes or held something in front of them he could not see till he opened them or removed

the object; if he blocked his ears with his hands he could hear nothing till he removed the blockage; if he held his nose he could no longer smell till he released it. He had been led therefore to believe that all his perceptions could be nullified by obstacles that would stop perceptions till the obstruction was removed.

Having examined all the external organs of the deer without discovering any obvious defect and observing that the inactivity extended to all the deer's organs without exception, it occurred to him that the malady affecting the deer might be sited in an internal organ, one whose function could not be taken over by any other; perhaps one on whose function all the others depended. Thus if some malady affected such an organ the damage would be comprehensive and total. He hoped that if he could find such an organ and remove what had obstructed it, it would be restored and all other functions would then act normally.

He had noticed in the past when examining dead animals that the only parts which had cavities were the skull, the chest and the abdomen. All the rest was solid. He felt that the organ he sought was probably located in one of these three places and he had an intuition that it was probably the central one. He felt certain now that all the other organs depended on this one and that it would occupy a central position. He had felt the presence of just such an organ in himself, inside his breast. At times he had speculated that even when he obstructed the function of hands, legs, ears, nose and eyes he could somehow still manage. He thought this might even apply to his head but when he turned to the organ in his breast he felt that this was something he could not do without—even for an instant. It was for this reason that he always tried, instinctively, to protect his breast from the horns of animals when he fought with them.

In this way he reached the conclusion that the organ in the deer which was obstructed was the organ in her breast. He decided to search for it and try to remove the obstruction.

Nevertheless he was afraid that if he took this action he might cause more damage than the original malady, whatever it was. He also reflected that he had never seen any animal, once it reached this state, returning to normal. This thought made him despair for the doe, if he left it as it was. There was therefore some little hope that if he found the affected organ and removed its obstruction she might return to normal. So he

resolved to slit open the deer's breast and make a search.

He had long ago made for himself makeshift knives from stone fragments and splinters. With these he slit open the deer's flesh between the ribs until he reached a strong membrane beneath. He felt certain now that the organ he sought would have just such a protection. He tried to cut into it but found this difficult owing to the inadequacy of his tools, so he replaced the cane and sharpened his stone knife and then found that he could open up the membrane. He had reached the deer's lungs and, to begin with, thought this was the object of his search. He examined them very carefully, first one then the other, before it occurred to him that what he was looking for was one central organ. He then searched further along the middle of the deer's chest and so found the heart which was indeed protected by a strong membrane and secured with ligaments.

One lung covered half the heart—on the side of his incision—and he said to himself 'If this organ has on its other side, what it has on this side, then it is truly in the centre and must be the organ I'm looking for. This seems most likely in view of its position, its beautiful form, its compactness and the fact that it is protected by a membrane, the like of which I haven't seen in any other organ.'

So he searched the other side of the chest and found a duplicate of the first lung with its membrane under the ribs. He now felt quite certain that the organ in the centre was the one he sought. He attempted to slit open its covering membrane and finally succeeded after great effort.

He uncovered the heart and found that it was sealed on all sides. He examined it for any visible defect and could find none. He took hold of it and when he did so, realized that it must be hollow inside. He thought: 'Maybe my ultimate goal is inside this organ and I haven't yet reached it'. So he slit it open and found two cavities inside, one to the right and one to the left, the right hand cavity being full of clotted blood, the left hand cavity being totally empty.

He said to himself: 'What I'm looking for must definitely be in one or other of these cavities'. He had already observed that blood clots and solidifies when it flows out of the body, so he now reasoned: 'It is definite that this blood did not clot until the body reached its present state and this is just ordinary blood. Blood like this is found in all organs, and isn't specific to any one

organ. What I'm looking for is something specific to this place, something I am unable to do without, even for an instant. Animals have often injured me and I have lost blood in considerable quantities. Yet this did not do me any harm and it certainly didn't cause me to lose any of my functions. This section therefore doesn't contain what I'm seeking. This left hand cavity is completely empty and there must be a reason for this. Every other organ carries out some specific function, so how could this one, having obviously an honourable state, be without any function? I have to conclude therefore, that what I am seeking was once in this cavity and has now vacated it and departed. It was when this happened that the body suffered such great damage that it could no longer sense or move.'

Thus he concluded that whatever had once occupied this cavity had now departed. Also, that it had departed while the organ was still intact, before he had cut it open. Now that the organ had been cut and torn by him, he felt certain that whatever it was that had once occupied it, would never return. Without this 'thing' the whole body seemed worthless and he now believed that this vital 'thing' inhabits a body for a certain time and then departs.

All his thoughts were now focused on this 'thing'. What was it? What links it to the body? Where has it now gone? Through which outlet of the body had it taken its departure? If it left unwillingly, what forced it to leave? And if it didn't leave unwillingly, what made it dislike the body so much that it decided to leave?

He now realized that the mother who had suckled him and comforted him was this 'thing'. It was from it that all her actions had emanated, not her body. With this realization, all interest in the dead body of the doe vanished and he discarded it from his thoughts, understanding that the body in its totality was an instrument, a tool, much like the sticks he employed when he had to fight the animals. All his interest was now focused on this 'thing' which owned a body and was its prime mover. This, and this only, he desired to know about.

Presently, the body of the deer began to rot and decay and give off a foul smell. This increased his repulsion for the body and he wished that he did not have to look at it. By chance he saw two ravens fight till one killed the other. The survivor then scratched the ground till he had made a hole and into this he pushed his dead adversary. The boy then thought: 'Though the

victorious raven was wrong to kill the other raven in the first place, he did a good action by burying the carcass. I should follow this example and do the same for my mother.' So he scraped a hole, pushed his mother's body into it and covered it up with earth.

He continued to think about this 'thing' which controlled the body but came to no conclusion as to what it could be. He noticed however that the form and shape of all the deer he saw was similar to his mother's. This led him to believe that each of them was controlled and activated by a 'thing' which was similar to that which had animated his mother. This feeling of kinship made him friendlier and more kindly to all the deer.

This remained his state for some time. He examined all the varieties of animal he could find all over the island, hoping always to find a being that resembled himself. He noted that for each type of animal or plant there were always many representatives. But he seemed to be the only one of his kind. Having seen that the island was entirely surrounded by water he concluded that there was no other land in existence.

One day a fire started in a thicket of cane and the sight terrified him. He stood looking at it in wonder for a while, then started to approach it, little by little. He noticed the penetrating light that came from it and he observed also how overwhelming was the action of the fire, consuming and transforming everything it touched. His amazement, coupled with the strength and courage which Allah Most High had given him, impelled him to stretch out his hand and try to take hold of it. The moment his hand made contact, the fire burned it and he learned that it was not something that could be grasped. He noticed a length of stick which was burning at one end only and he ventured to take hold of it at the unburnt end. He discovered that this was possible and he returned to the cave which he had for some time used at his home, with a burning brand.

The fire amazed him and delighted him and he kept it alight by giving it attention day and night, stoking it with dry grass and sticks. What pleased him most was that the fire at night-time provided a substitute for the light and heat of the day-time sun. His delight in fire was unbounded and he regarded fire as his best possession. He noted that fire always moved up, as though its nature was to ascend and this made him think that fire must be in some way related to the circles of light he saw in the sky.

It occurred to him to test the strength of fire on a number of different things by dropping them into it and he noticed that it overwhelmed some things more rapidly than others. It so happened that one day among the things he dropped into his fire were some marine creatures which had been washed up by the sea. As these started to cook, the aroma made him want to taste them and when he did, he found he liked the taste very much. In this way he learned to eat meat. This made him apply his cunning and ingenuity to hunting and fishing and presently he excelled in both.

His love for fire grew because, through it, he was able to extend his diet and utilize things for food which had not been possible before. The range of possibilities inherent in fire made him more than ever fascinated by it and it suddenly occurred to him that the 'thing' which had departed from the deer's heart—his mother's heart—must be of the same or a similar nature to the essence of fire. This idea was reinforced by the observation that animals are warm as long as they are alive and become cold when they die; also by the observation that there was heat in his own chest in the area where he had cut open the deer.

He then had an idea. Supposing he cut open the heart in a live animal and examined the section which, in his mother's heart, he had found empty. Surely in the case of a live animal he would find the cavity filled with this thing and so establish whether it had the essence of fire and whether it gave out light or heat.

So he caught an animal and tied it up and slit open its flesh on the same side as he had cut into the doe, till he reached its heart. He now opened up the left hand section and found it was filled with a steam-like gas similar to white fog. When he pushed his finger into the chamber he found it nearly hot enough to burn. At this point the animal died. From all this, he concluded that this hot vapour was the driving force that moved an animal; that there is some of it in in every animal; and that when this is separated from the animal, it dies immediately.

He then felt impelled to investigate all the other organs of the animal, observing their arrangement, position, quantity and size. He discovered how they are all interconnected and how they all draw upon this hot steam for the maintenance of their lives. But how, he wondered, does the steam last only for a given time? Where does it come from in the first place? And why does its heat not become less?

These speculations led him to investigate further both on dead and living animals and his findings and reflections finally brought him to a level of knowledge equal to that of the highest natural scientists.

It became clear to him that every animal, although apparently a multiplicity—if one considered all its separate organs, senses and movements—was really a unity if seen in terms of that spirit which emanated from a single place and spread from there to all the other organs. All these organs were merely assistants or servants to it. The position of this spirit was like that of one totally equipped for successful hunting on either land or sea and also totally equipped to deal with enemies. Such a one would have an appropriate tool for hunting in each category and the appropriate tool for defence and for attack in each category. He would have exactly what was necessary for dissecting, slitting, breaking and drilling. Just such a unity he decided, was the body, employing exactly those tools and instruments required to meet its objectives.

Thus, he decided, the animal spirit is one. If it acts through the instrument of the eye, its action is seeing; if through the instrument of the ear, hearing; if through the instrument of the nose, smelling; if through the instrument of the tongue, tasting; if through the skin and flesh, sensation. If it acts through the upper arm, its action is movement; if it acts through the liver, the action is nourishment. Each such organ has other organs serving it and no action takes place in any organ except from impulses of the spirit conveyed along routes called nerves. If any of these routes is cut, the organ to which it is connected ceases to act. These nerves channel the spirit from the depths of the brain but the brain, like all other organs, receives its spirit from the heart.

The brain has many spirits because it is an organ divided into many parts. Now if, for any reason, any organ ceases to receive spirit, its action stops and it becomes like a discarded tool no longer serving any purpose. And if, for any reason, the spirit in its entirety persishes, disintegrates or leaves the body, then the whole body ceases to function and is transformed into the state of death. He had lived through three sets of seven years and was a man of twenty-one, when, by all his thinking and reflection, he arrived at these conclusions.

Through all these years his skills and inventiveness had become ever sharper from use. He had learned to utilize the

skins of the animals he dissected as clothes and he also made shoes from skins. For thread, he used hair and plant fibres; for fishing hooks he used thorns and reeds sharpened against a stone. The idea of building came to him from watching the swallows and this led him to construct a store for his spare food which he sealed off with a door made from bound cane. No animal could then get to it while he was away. He tamed wild birds and then trained them to help him hunt. He kept poultry and so had eggs and meat. He used the horns of wild cattle as spear tips, attaching them to a length of cane or beech wood, chipping or burning the wood till he made it fit. He also made a shield, using several layers of animal skin. All these things compensated for the deficiency in natural weapons which he recognized in himself.

But although he realized that with his hands he could manufacture artefacts which made good his deficiencies so that none of the animals could stand up to him, he was not their equal in speed and they could frequently escape from him. He pondered on some way of surmounting this difficulty and could think of no better solution than to use some of the swifter animals to carry him. So he befriended some of these animals by giving them the food they liked until he had domesticated them, after which he mounted them and so was able to chase and capture what animals he needed.

Among the animals on the island there were horses and donkeys. So he selected the ones best suited to his purpose and trained them, developing as he went along the bridles, saddles and ropes which he found necessary. Now finally, he was able to chase and bring down the animals which he had been unable to capture before.

All these things were devised and developed while he was still engaged in extending his knowledge of animal organs by investigation and dissection. As we said, he was now twenty-one years old.

From then on his thoughts took a new direction. He examined all objects subject to creation and decay—the animals and plants in all their varieties, the metals and rocks and such things as soil, water, steam, ice, snow, hail, smoke and flames. He concluded that all of them had some qualities in common and some qualities that were specific. When considered from the viewpoint of their common qualities they were all one. When considered from the viewpoint of their different

qualities, they were a multiplicity. If he tried to set out the unique characteristics, those qualities which separated them from others, then the variety of difference was truly enormous and the whole of creation spread out into a multiplicity beyond classification.

When he considered his own being and looked at the variety of his organs, each with a unique function and a specific quality, then his being did indeed seem to be a multiplicity.

On the other hand he could see that his organs, though many, were all interconnected and related and from this point of view his being was a unity. The different functions of different organs depended on what reached them of the power of the spirit, the spirit itself being one. From this line of thought he concluded that spirit is a unity in its essence and is the reality beyond the self, all the organs being merely tools. His own self now appeared as a unity.

By extension from this line of thought, he could see that each individual animal was a unity. He then examined the animals not as individuals but as species—deer, horses, donkeys and every variety of bird. He then saw that the members of each species were alike in their external and internal organs, in their senses, movements and instincts, with individual differences that were very small in comparison with the similarities they shared. He concluded that the spirit indwelling each species is a unity but divided among many hearts.

If it were possible, he thought, to collect in one vessel the spirit shared out among so many hearts, then it would appear as a single entity—much like water which has been collected from many containers and brought together into one. Thus, whether it is in a collected or a separated state, spirit is still the same thing, its appearance as multiplicity being merely a consequence of the viewpoint. Considered in this way, a species was a single entity and its many members were as the many organs in one individual: thus, not a multiplicity but a unity.

He then brought together in his imagination *all* the animal species. He could see that in certain respects they were all alike, sharing the ability to sense, to need food and to move at will in a desired direction. These tendencies he had already decided were the chief characteristics of the animal spirit and manifestations outside them were not strongly related to the animal spirit. His speculations now led him to conclude that the animal spirit was indeed one for the whole animal kingdom.

When projected through different animal species there were differences appropriate to each species. This was much like finding that when a quantity of water was divided into different containers there was a slight difference in temperature between them. In essence, the spirit is one but it manifests differently to some extent depending on the nature of the receptacle into which it is poured. All receptacles at the same temperature, as it were, are a single species. In this way he concluded that the whole animal kingdom is a single entity.

He then fell to reflecting upon the variety of plants, noting that each species shared common characteristics among its members in the matter of branch, leaf, blossom, fruit, movement and function. By comparing plants with animals he came to the conclusion that plants all share a certain something and that this is, to them, what the animal spirit is to the animals. Through this 'thing' all plants are one.

He then lumped together in his imagination all the plant species and all the animal species and saw that plants and animals alike share a common manifestation in feeding and growth. The animals have, however, surpassed the plants in having, additionally, senses, perception and movement. Some plants display a partial capacity of this kind in turning to the sun, by having roots that move towards a source of food and other such actions.

It seemed to him therefore that plant and animal are one, in that they share a thing in common; this thing, however, being more completely manifested in animals owing to some restriction in plants. He thought of an analogy: water divided between two containers: in one, it is fluid; in the other it has solidified. From this viewpoint plant and animal appeared to him as one.

He next reflected on inanimate things that do not sense or feed or grow, like earth, water, air and flame. He saw that such things did share something, namely—length, width and depth and were therefore alike in having these things in common. They differed however in having qualities peculiar to themselves. Some exhibited colour and others were colourless. Some were hot, others cold. He observed that cold bodies could warm up and warm bodies cool down. He further observed that water can turn into vapour and vapour can condense back into water. Objects, when they burn, are transformed into embers, ash, flame and smoke and if the smoke encounters something like a stone surface, it settles on it and assumes a state more like

other material objects. By reflecting on all this, he came to the conclusion that all inanimate things are one and if, from a certain viewpoint, they appear as a multiplicity, this is similar to the situation in plants and animals.

He fell to pondering about the 'thing' through which plants and animals were, in his view, united. Being an object, it would have, like other objects, length, breadth and depth. It would be either warm or cold like the inanimate objects which do not sense or feed; but it would be unlike them in that its actions were produced only through plant or animal instruments.

> Perhaps these actions initiated by the 'thing' were not even self-engendered. Perhaps they were received by it from something else. And perhaps if other bodies received this something directly they would be like the 'thing'.
>
> OR
>
> Perhaps actions exhibited by a plant or animal were not self-engendered. Perhaps they were received by the plant or animal from the 'thing' and if inanimate bodies received the same impulses they would be like plants or animals.

He turned to himself and debated about what he would be like without the actions which appeared to be emanating from him. He saw himself then as a mere body, one with all other bodies. Looked at in this way, he realized that all bodies are one thing, whether they are living or inanimate, static or dynamic—except that some can exhibit action through instruments. He could not decide whether these actions were self-willed or whether they were communicated from an outside agency. In this line of thought he confined himself to the consideration of bodies only, and thus saw the whole creation as an infinite, unconfined multiplicity. For a time he remained within these lines of thought.

Later he considered all bodies, animate and inanimate, which appeared to him sometimes as a unity and at other times as a multitude. He concluded that every one of them behaved in only one of two ways: they moved either upwards or downwards. Example: smoke or flame or air which was trapped under water tended to move upwards. Bits of earth or parts of plants and animals tended to move in a downward direction. No body ever deviated from its natural inclination in this respect. Further, he concluded that an object would remain static only if

its natural motion in a particular direction was restricted by another object. Thus a falling stone was stopped by the earth's surface but had the stone been able to penetrate the earth it would have continued along its path of motion. This was why, when one lifted a stone, it tended to drag one down, owing to its tendency to descend. And this was why ascending smoke deviated from its motion in an upward direction only when it encountered some solid object which deflected it. The smoke then bends either to right or left and, if it manages to clear the obstacle, it continues in its upward course, since air is incapable of containing it.

He had also observed that a skin filled with air and securely tied would struggle to ascend through water, exerting a force on whatever was trying to prevent it. While under water it retained this tendency to rise; but once it had succeeded in emerging from the water it became static and lost this inclination.

He searched for any body which did not obey, or tend to obey, one or other of these motions and could find none. Had he been able to find such a body, then, he reasoned, he would have been able to observe its nature independently of those additional characteristics which amount to multiplicity.

He became tired of his search when he realized it was fruitless and he concentrated on objects which exhibited the upward or downward tendency to the least degree. He found some objects which showed these tendencies only very slightly but found none that were totally innocent of them. Thus he came to the concept of heaviness and lightness and began to speculate as to whether such properties existed by themselves or only in association with objects. He concluded that these properties must be separate from the bulk of objects, since, if they were intrinsic, bodies would have both properties together; and he had never found any object that was both light and heavy. Experience showed him that a heavy object lacks lightness and a light object lacks heaviness. Beyond dispute each of them was an object but each had a quality in addition to its bulk or mass which made it different from the other. Without this difference they would have been identical.

He then concluded that each object, light or heavy, had two qualities. One of these qualities, bulk or mass, was shared by all. The other quality, lightness or heaviness, was unique to the object possessing it and was in some way related to the *kind* of

bulk the object displayed—as shown by its tendency to move either up or down.

Applying this conclusion to animate as well as inanimate objects, he decided that the structure of all of them consisted in having the bulk or mass property and, additionally, one or more further properties.

Reviewing all this in his mind, he found himself looking at images of the bodies he was considering. Such images are imperceptible to the senses and are the consequence of a certain kind of mental activity. This marked his first contact with the spiritual world. Amongst the things which he saw in images was the spirit which dwells in the heart. He saw that in addition to its physical property it had an extra property which enabled it to execute the functions of sense, perception and motion. This additional quality was unique to it and separated it from all other bodies. It was what philosophers call the animal soul.

Similarly, there exists in the plant kingdom something which provides for plants what the animal soul provides for the animals. It is unique to the world of plants and provides its image and form. Philosophers call it the plant soul.

Again, the inanimate kingdom, which consists of all things that are created and decay, excluding plants and animals, also has its unique 'thing'. Each body in the inanimate world performs its own special function and exhibits its own individual movements and qualities in response to the influence of this 'thing' and all of them are a form and image of it. This is what philosophers call nature.

He now realized that the animal spirit, knowledge of which he had desired for so long, had two components, a bulk quality and an additional quality. When he understood, as he did now, that the bulk or body quality was shared elsewhere but the other quality was unique to the animals, he lost interest in the bulk or body aspect and concentrated his thoughts on to the second aspect, i.e., on the Self.

He persisted in thinking about this because he felt great need to discover the truth. To begin with, he decided to consider objects and bodies not from the aspect of their bulk or mass but from the standpoint of the properties which distinguished them from each other. He concentrated on this line of thought and selected one group of objects which had one or two properties in common. He at once noticed that a section of this group, though

its members shared certain properties with all the others, had also some other characteristic exclusive to its own sub-section.

For example, he grouped together all heavy objects and included animals and plants in this as well as soil, stones and minerals. All these share the property of tending towards downward motion. If any of them was forced in an upward direction, it resumed a downward motion as soon as it was released. But one section of this grouping, namely the plants and animals, though sharing the downward motion tendency of the others, had in addition a property not possessed by others outside its own sub-section, namely the capacity to absorb nutrition and to grow.

Now an entity capable of nutrition can seek out substances not dissimilar to itself and transform them into its own substance, thus replacing what has been lost through use and decay. Such an entity can also grow by extending into three dimensions within specific limits of ratio and extent.

These two actions, nutrition and growth, are common to plants and animals and are undoubtedly produced by a something shared by both of them. This shared something is the plant soul. But the animal part of this section while sharing the capacity for nutrition and growth with the plants has, in addition, a further capacity involving sensation and locomotion.

He observed also that each distinct animal species had qualities which distinguished it from all other species. He realized that this was due to the action of a something unique to it as a species and additional to what it shared with the rest of the animal kingdom. Each plant species was in a comparable situation. It became clear to him then that all perceptible objects in the created world are endowed with qualities, few or many, in addition to the common possession of physical mass.

Realizing that the plants and animals possessing fewest attributes would be easiest to understand, he tried to find examples to study. But on recalling that all plants and animals were distinguished by a very large number of attributes, he decided to defer this line of study for the time being and to concentrate on the inanimate. Even there, some forms were simpler than others, so he chose the simplest he could find. He settled for water, earth, fire and air as being simplest, measured by the limited number of actions they could produce. He had already suspected that these elements were capable of

being transformed into each other.

They had bulk as a common quality and he considered that this quality of bulk must be free from all the other attributes which distinguish other things. This attribute, bulk, would not exhibit a tendency to move upwards or downwards, would not show wetness or dryness nor heat or cold. The four elements of earth, air, fire and water had none of these attributes in common and hence no attribute of this kind was eligible as a means of designating them.

So, if it were possible to find an object with no attributes other than bulk and hence being innocent of the attributes possessed by other things, then each quality found in such an object would be basic to all the other objects found in such a variety of different forms.

He searched for some quality common to animate and inanimate objects alike and came to the conclusion that the only such common factor was extension into the three dimensions of length, breadth and depth. He realized that this was the basic minimum which qualified an object to be itself but his senses failed to produce an example. Anything that possessed extension also possessed other attributes. He pondered a great deal on this, wondering if extension in three dimensions was the final essence of an object or whether there was something more beyond. He then realized that behind the extension there was a quality within which the extension took place—the Self of the object.

He tried out this concept on some tangible objects possessing a shape. Clay, if shaped into a sphere would have a certain measure of length, width and depth. If the sphere of clay was now reformed into a cube or an egg shape, length, width and depth would take on new values but the clay would remain the same clay, unaltered in any way.

But although the clay's dimensions could alter within limits, without dimensions the clay could not be itself. The fact that dimensions could be altered while essence remained unaffected made it clear to him that essence was a quality behind extension. But as the clay could not be clay without extension of some sort, he concluded that essence and extension were a joint reality for the clay.

This suggested to him that a body, in order to be a body, must have two qualities. The first is analogous to the original clay, as clay; the second is analogous to the cube or ovoid it could be

formed into. No object could be conceived which did not have both qualities. Neither quality could exist without the other. The quality of extension which could manifest in many shapes was analogous to the variety of forms which bodies exhibit everywhere. The quality which remains unchanged, the clay as clay, is analogous to the quality of bulk shared by all bodies everywhere. The concept of clay as clay is what the philosophers call *hyle*—matter without form of any kind.

When his considerations reached this stage he felt fatigued with conceptual thinking and was nostalgic for the world of the senses to which he was accustomed. He turned back to the four simple, perceived objects he had previously considered.

Taking water first, he observed that if water was examined as a liquid, two qualities could be observed: a coldness and a tendency to move downwards. If heated gently by fire or by the sun, the cold aspect was reduced but the tendency to press downward remained. If heated strongly however, the tendency to downward movement also departed and a tendency to ascend became apparent. Thus it had lost both of the qualities associated with its form—and it was never known to have more than these two associated with its liquid form. So when these two qualities—the cold and downward thrusting attributes—disappeared, the liquid form lost its ability to command these attributes. And the liquid form itself departed from the water when the water began to behave in a fashion appropriate to another form. When the water took this new form the attributes then displayed could not have manifested had the form remained as it was.

Thus he was forced to conclude that every action must be produced by a cause. From this realization a generalized image took shape in his mind as to what caused form. He went through all the forms he had considered at one time or another and realized that since all of them had happened, there must have been a cause for each. He tried to consider the essence of each form and decided that the essence was simply the potential of a body to produce actions. Water, if intensely heated, becomes prepared to show upward motion. Its potential is contained in its form. The capacity of an object to take certain actions rather than other actions resided in its form. This applied to all the forms he considered and he saw that actions produced by forms were not really due to the forms but to a cause that produced, through the forms, the actions we ascribe

to them. The meaning that he now glimpsed is the same as contained in the saying of the Prophet—may Allah's blessings and peace be upon him—'I became his hearing which he hears with and I became his sight which he sees with'[4] and the same also as the one given in the perfect revelation,[5] 'It is not ye who slew them; it was Allah; when thou threwest [a handful of dust], it was not thy act but Allah's.[6]

So when he had achieved this brief and generalized knowledge of cause, he experienced an intense longing to know more about it in detail. As he was still dealing with the world of the senses he sought information about cause among objects available to the senses, not knowing yet whether cause was one or many. So he examined again all the objects he had been thinking about and saw that all of them came into existence at some time and decayed at a later time. Those which did not decay in their totality, decayed in some of their parts, like earth and water. He had seen parts of these decay through the action of fire and had seen air decay through intense cold which formed snow, later to flow again as water.

Of all the bodies he considered, he did not find a single one which could have arisen without a specific cause. On deciding that this was the case, he discarded this line of search and turned his attention to the heavenly bodies. When he arrived at this stage he had lived through four sets of seven years. He was now a man of twenty-eight.

He concluded that the stars and the heavens which accommodate them are objects. All of them extend in three dimensions of length, width and depth and whatever possesses such a quality must be an object. Therefore the stars and the heavens were objects.

He reflected on the size of the heavens. Did they stretch out indefinitely, extending in length, width and depth to infinity? Or did they extend a finite distance at which point their extension ceased, this point being one beyond which no extension was possible? These possibilities puzzled him for a while but such was the strength of his inborn intelligence that he quickly came to the conclusion that infinite extension is an unreal concept. This was confirmed by a number of arguments he developed in his mind. For example, he argued like this:

[4] One of the verified and collected sayings (*Hadith*) of the Prophet Muhammad.
[5] *The Holy Koran.*
[6] *The Koran,* surat At Anfal, 17.

'This heavenly body I'm looking at, is finite on the side which faces me. My senses tell me this, I can see it with my own eyes and I cannot doubt that it is so. As for its opposite side, which I am doubtful about, I deduce that it cannot extend to infinity for the following reason. Suppose two lines start from the finite side of the body and go through the thickness of the body in accordance with its extension to infinity. Suppose I now cut off a large portion of one of these lines (from the end nearest to the finite side). Let me now visualize both lines, the cut and the uncut, arranged so that they both start at the finite face of the body and extend as before through its thickness. I now find two possibilities. The first possibility is that both lines still extend to infinity, neither being shorter than the other. This would mean that the line with the part cut off is the same length as the uncut line—an impossibility, since a part cannot be equal to a whole. The other possibility is that the cut line does not extend as far as the uncut line but stops short, making it thus finite. If I now restore to the cut line the part which I cut off—and this was a finite length—then the whole of it becomes finite. Both lines were, however, equal to begin with: so the uncut line must also be finite. It is possible to apply such an operation to any object and it therefore follows that every object is finite. Thus the assumption that any object is infinite is false and impossible.'

Thus he convinced himself, through the exercise of the high level of intelligence he possessed, that the heavens were finite. Now he wanted to discover the shape of the heavens and their limiting distances. He observed the sun, moon and stars and noted that they all rose from the east and set in the west. He also noted that the ones which passed through the zenith described a large circle and those inclined off the zenith to north or south described a smaller circle. Those farthest from the zenith described a smaller circle than those nearer the zenith, this ratio terminating with the two smallest circles of all—one circumscribing the south pole (which we know as the orbit of Canopus) and the other circumscribing the north pole (this is the orbit of Ursa Minor). The island was on the equator, as we have mentioned, and thus all these circles lay on his horizon and were visible whether they lay to the north or south of his home. The two poles likewise.

He noticed that when two stars, one describing a large circle and the other a small circle, rose at the same time, they also set

at the same time. He found that this held for all stars and all times. This convinced him that the firmament must be spherical and he was strengthened in this belief by what he had observed of the sun, moon and stars: they returned from the east after setting in the west. Also, they retained their own specific size whether in their rising, peak or setting positions. Had the motion he observed been non-circular, such objects in the sky would sometimes have been nearer and sometimes farther away and would thus have appeared to him to change size according to their distance. He had never noticed this happening and concluded that he was correct in assuming spherical shape.

He observed the motion of the moon and the planets very closely and discovered that they had many minor orbits, all however contained in the one great orbit which moved them from east to west in a day and a night. He explained all this to his own satisfaction and in brief he discovered a large part of the science of astronomy.

When he attained this level of knowledge he realized that the heavens and all they contained were like a single entity connected within itself and that all the bodies he had considered before, earth, air, fire, water, plants animals, etc., were all within the firmament and not apart from it. In its entirety it was not unlike an animal organism, the luminous stars being the creature's senses, its many interconnected orbits corresponding to animal organs and its inherent nature, incorporating creation and decay, was similar to the viscera of an animal within which both decay and new life could arise. Macrocosm and microcosm.

He realized that the whole universe, when he applied to it the same outlook that he had applied to objects on the earth, had the nature of a single being. He now tried to contemplate the universe in its entirety. Was it something which had come into being from non-being, something that had emerged into existence from non-existence? Or was it something which had always existed and had never at any time not existed? He could not feel that either view was satisfactory and neither seemed to command conviction over the other. Whenever he tried to picture the universe as eternal, this view was vulnerable to all the arguments which applied to the concept of infinity—the arguments that had convinced him that a body with infinite dimensions was impossible. Also, he concluded that a created

world could not be free of events and so could not have preceded events. The universe, therefore must have come into being at some point.

But when he considered the idea of a moment of creation this view too was subject to many objections. He could see that the idea of a universe coming into being out of nothing could not be understood unless time existed previously. Time, however was an integral part of creation and was totally inconceivable without creation. Thus the concept that there was an interval between the moment of creation and the coming into existence of time was meaningless. He went on to reason:

'If the universe is an event, it must have a cause and if it had a cause, why did it act when it did and not earlier? Was there something which influenced the cause? But if there was nothing except the cause, how could anything influence it? Was the explanation simply that the cause had experienced a change in its essence? But if so, there must have been a cause that caused this change.'

For several years he continued thinking and reflecting about such concepts. Over this period of time each concept continued to contradict the other and neither the idea of an eternal nor a created universe carried conviction.

He began to reflect on what each of the alternatives implied. Perhaps, he thought, both might turn out to have the selfsame implications. If the universe was created, if it emerged into being from non-being, that situation required a creator to bring it about. Such a creator would not be detectable by the senses because if the creator were detectable by the senses, this would mean that he was one of the objects of creation and thus an event requiring a cause. Such a prior cause, if it too were an object, would require a cause anterior to it, and so on into an infinite regress. This, he felt, would explain nothing.

A created universe, he realized, required the concept of a creator who was not an object. Such a creator would not be detectable by the five senses since the senses are capable only of perceiving physical objects and their effects. However, if something cannot be perceived, it cannot be imagined because imagination is merely the capacity to synthesize the images of perceivable things when they are absent. If the creator is not a physical object then none of the characteristics of physical objects apply, the first of such characteristics being extension in three dimensions. Such a creator must be above the attribute

of extension in length, width and depth and also above all the other attributes of physical bodies. Such a creator would have power over his creation and would know it totally. 'Should He not know—He that created? And He is the One that understands the finest mysteries [and] is well acquainted [with them].'[7]

If one took the alternative view—a universe that had no beginning and was not preceded by a time when it was not—then this gave the universe an infinite age. This was vulnerable to the following objection. Every motion requires a cause intrinsic to the body or imparted from outside. Every force which flows and diffuses in a body is reduced if the body is reduced and it increases if the body is increased. A stone falling downwards, for example, loses half its weight if you halve the stone. If you increase the weight by adding stones of equal weight then the total weight increases in equal amounts. If this process is increased to infinity, weight will increase to infinity also; if the process is stopped at a certain stage then the weight reaches a certain value and stops there. He deduced, however, that every physical object is necessarily finite, so it follows that the force operating in any object is also finite.

So, if we discover a force which causes an infinite physical action, then it follows that such a force is not intrinsic to the object concerned. Since we are considering the view that the universe is eternal, then its observed ceaseless motion must be eternal also. It follows therefore that the force which causes motion in the universe is neither in the material objects of the heavens nor in any external physical object. It must, then, belong to something which is non-material and innocent of all the attributes of matter.

In his earlier reflections on the world of creation and decay he had glimpsed that for each physical thing, the reality of its existence lay in its form and image, that is, in its potential for various motions and actions. The degree of being which it possesses by virtue of its physical existence is so negligible as to defy calculation. The being and existence of the whole physical world is therefore its potential for being moved and activated by this Mover who has none of the attributes of matter and none of the properties or qualities of physical objects. The nature of this Mover is such that He cannot be perceived by any sense or grasped by imagination. If, therefore, He is the cause of the

[7] *The Koran*, surat Al Mulk, 14.

endless unceasing movements of the Heavens he must, beyond doubt, be capable of holding absolute power over them and knowledge of them.

Thus, through two lines of thought, he reached the same conclusion; and, though he could not decide whether the universe had been created or had always existed, this did not affect this conclusion. The conclusion was that a Cause exists which has no physical body; is neither connected nor separated from a body; is neither inside nor outside a body. All such relationships are qualities and properties of physical matter and He is above and beyond all such things.

Every physical object can exist only through form and image. Without these it can have no permanent reality. This form and image arises from the action of the Creator. It became clear therefore that all creation depends for its existence on Him and no part of creation can subsist without Him. He is therefore its cause and it is His effect. And this is so whether the universe was created or has always existed. In either case existence is an effect and derives from a Cause on which its existence depends.

Had it not been for the permanence of the Creator, the universe could not have endured. Had it not been for His existence, it could not have existed. And without his Eternity it would not have been so ancient. Yet He, in His essence, is innocent of it and independent of it. How could it be otherwise, when it has been shown that His power is infinite and all physical objects together with all their attributes, however closely or indirectly related to them, are finite? Therefore the whole universe and all that is between, above and beneath it, is His creation and due to his action. However, though below Him in essence, physical objects are not behind Him in time.

If you grasp an object and move your hand, the object will follow the motion of your hand. This motion is behind the motion of your hand in essence but simultaneous to it in time. So the whole universe is caused and created by this time-independent Creator. 'Verily when He intends a thing His command is "Be" and it is!'[8]

When he realized that all creation was God's work he looked at it then from the viewpoint of this power which the Creator had: the wonder of His craftsmanship, the subtleness of His wisdom and the precision of His knowledge. As he contemplated the wonders of creation, from the smallest to the

[8] *The Koran,* surat Yasin, 82.

greatest, he realized that all this could derive only from a Creator of complete perfection—'From whom is not hidden the least little atom in the Heavens or on earth: nor is there anything less than that, or greater.'[9]

He next examined all the animal species and how: 'He Who gave to each [created] thing, its form and nature and further gave it guidance'[10] for its usage. Had He not given each species guidance in the use of the organs He had created for it to use, no animal would have been able to use its organs and they would be merely a burden. He, therefore, was most generous and most merciful.

Whenever he noticed some created thing which had comeliness or beauty or perfection or power, or some form of goodness, he would realize as he contemplated it, that all such attributes derived from the existence, action and emanation of that Creator (Glory be to Him). He realized that He in His essence must be greater, more perfect, more complete, more comely, more beautiful and more permanent. He traced all the qualities of perfection and knew they were His and emanated from Him only. He was the sole deserving entity who was worthy of description by them.

He looked then at the shortcomings in creatures and found that He was innocent of these shortcomings. How could He be otherwise than innocent of them when a shortcoming is nothing else than absolute non-existence? How could non-existence have any link or relationship with Absolute Being, whose essence is the source of existence of every being? There was no existence but Him. He was existence. He was perfection, He was totality. He was goodness and beauty and power and knowledge. He was He and 'Everything [that exists] will perish except His own face.'[11]

He attained this stage of knowledge when he had lived through five sets of seven years from the time of his emergence. He was a man of thirty-five years. Thoughts about the Creator had now accumulated in his heart to such an extent that he lost all interest in his previous lines of inquiry into created things. He was now at a stage where, the moment he contemplated any object, he could discern in it the traces of the Creator. His thoughts then transferred at once from the created to the

[9] *The Koran,* surat Saba, 3.
[10] *The Koran,* surat Tah, 50.
[11] *The Koran,* surat Alqsas, 88.

Creator. This process continued in him until the longing he felt for the Creator became intense and his heart detached itself from the lower sensory world completely and attached itself instead to the higher world of thought.

When he had attained to this degree of knowledge of the exalted and permanent Being whose existence has no cause (while He is the cause of all existence) he found himself asking how he had come to such knowledge. Through what faculty had he acquired it?

He examined all his senses, hearing, sight, taste, smell and touch and understood that these senses could register only a physical object or whatever was inside a physical object. Hearing senses audibles—that is, the waves created in the air when objects collide. Vision senses colour. Smell senses scent. Taste senses flavours and touch senses the temper of a thing, its softness or hardness, its roughness or smoothness. Similarly, the imaginative power can represent only such things as have dimensions of length, breadth and depth. Sensations are all related to the qualities of physical objects and the senses can detect nothing else. This is so because the senses are powers dispersed within physical objects and divided as they are divided. For this reason the senses register only the components of a whole, for if the power of sensing is dispersed over the fragments, whatever is sensed is only a fragment.

It was now clear to him that this Being, whose existence was necessary, was innocent in every respect of all the qualities of physical matter and it followed that He could be perceived only by something which was non-physical. This something could not be a power within a physical body nor could it be associated with a physical body in any way; neither connected to it nor disconnected from it; neither inside it nor outside it. He had already realized that it was his own essence that had enabled him to glimpse that Being and this strengthened his knowledge of it. He also realized that his own essence, through which he had perceived that Being, was a non-physical entity having no physical qualities. Anything he could perceive of his essence in an external physical form was not it in reality. The reality of his essence was the thing that had allowed him to glimpse the Absolute Being.

When he realized that his essence was not the skin-covered physical self which he perceived with his senses, his body lost its value in his own eyes and he turned from it to contemplating

the honourable thing through which he had been enabled to perceive that noble Being.

He considered his essence anew. Was it susceptible to deterioration, disintegration and decay, or was it permanent? He saw that decay and disintegration were attributes of physical matter when it discards one form and assumes another. Water, for example, changes into air and air is transformed into water. Plants turn into earth or ash while earth turns into plant. This is what decay means. As for a thing which is not material and needs no body to substantiate its existence, being totally above and beyond corporeality, the concept of decay is unimaginable.

Having thus deduced that his own essence could not decay, he wondered what its state would be once it discarded and abandoned its physical body. He had realized that essence does not discard the physical body until the body no longer serves it adequately as an instrument.

He examined all his powers of perception and found that each was capable of two states: potential and actual. The eye, for example, when closed or obscured perceives potentially: i.e., it is not perceiving now but may do so in future. While open and seeing, the eye is in its actual mode, i.e., seeing now. So it was with all the senses; all could function either actually or potentially. Now if any sense has never at any time functioned in the actual way, it does not long for this mode since it knows only the potential and is not acquainted with the other. This is similar to the state of a person born blind. Had his eyes at any time been able actually to see and had then reverted to the potential mode, such a person would yearn for vision very strongly because he had experienced it and become attached to it. This is the condition of a person who was once sighted and is now blind. He longs for visible things.

Now, according to the extent of beauty, glory and perfection of a thing perceived, so in proportion is the longing for it and the pain involved in losing it. And this is why the pain of a person who loses his sight after being able to see is greater than the pain of one who loses his sense of smell, for the objects perceived by sight are more beautiful and perfect than what is conveyed by smell. Now if there were among all things something of infinite perfection, limitless beauty, comeliness and glory—above all perfection, comeliness, glory and beauty—and all of them emanating from it, then whoever had once known such a thing and then lost the perception of it, would undoubtedly

suffer infinite pain so long as that loss endured.

On the other hand, one who perceives it continuously, experiences uninterrupted pleasure, boundless joy and delight, and happiness without limit, since the Being whose existence is necessary has all the attributes of Perfection and is innocent of and beyond all shortcomings.

It became clear to him that whoever has an essence containing the potential for such perception and who has not, during the period when he has a body to utilize, contacted or become acquainted with or has perhaps never heard of, this Being whose existence is necessary, then such a one on shedding his physical body at death, would not suffer pain from losing a contact he never had.

All the forces of the body cease to exist when the body ceases to exist and hence do not long for the object of their fulfilment or suffer any pain as a result of losing it. This is the situation of all dumb animals whether they have a human or a non-human form.

But take the case of one who, while he has a body to utilize, does become acquainted with that Being and comes to know His perfection, glory and power. If such a one then turns his back on Him and follows his own whims till he dies, then he will indeed long greatly for the vision. It will however be denied him and he will remain in a state of extended suffering and great pain. From this state he will either emerge after a long struggle and then witness what he longs for, or he will remain forever in his suffering; these alternatives being consequent upon his preparedness during physical life.

The case is different for one who became acquainted while in the body with this Being whose existence is necessary; who undertook with all his being to seek Him and to concentrate his thoughts always on His glory, beauty and magnificence; and who did not turn away from Him until death arrived. Such a one is in a state of experience and vision, and when he leaves the body he remains in an endless state of pleasure because his vision of the Being whose existence is necessary is continuous and there are no blemishes or impurities to impede it. He is also relieved of the sensual demands of the physical powers which, compared to that state, are as pains, evils and obstacles.

He realized that the perfection and joy of essence lies in witnessing constantly that Being whose existence is necessary and in not turning away from Him for a single instant right up to

the moment of death. Then, dying in that state of vision, his joy would continue unblemished.

He debated with himself how he might ensure the continuity of that vision so that nothing might distract him from it and he tried to keep his thoughts on that Being at all times. However, the moment some object came into view or he heard the sound of some animal or an image intruded upon his imagination; or when he felt pain in a limb or hunger or thirst, heat or cold, or when he had to relieve himself, then he found that his attention was broken and his state became altered. When this happened it took a great deal of effort to return to the state of witnessing. He was afraid he might die while in a state of distraction and would in consequence experience the pain of the veil and perpetual unhappiness. His condition upset him and he could see no cure for it.

So he returned to his review of the animal species, what their actions involved and what they aimed at. He hoped that he might detect in them some indication that they too were aware of this Being and were striving towards Him. If so, perhaps he could learn from them the means of his own salvation. He found however that all of them sought sustenance and the relief of their appetites, whether food or drink, sex, shade or warmth and maintained this pattern until their life term ended and they died. He concluded that they do not perceive that Being, are not acquainted with Him and do not yearn for Him and that all of them are on their way to a state equivalent to nothingness.

When he arrived at this conclusion in respect of animal life he realized that it must apply even more so to the plants, since they perceive only a fraction of what animals perceive. If animals, with more perfected perception, have not reached this knowledge then it was most unlikely that plants could attain it. He had also observed that plant activity goes no further than nutrition and multiplying.

He turned then to the stars and heavenly bodies and decided that their transparent and luminous nature and their regular and uniform motion must place them beyond change and decay. Intuitively and very strongly he felt that they must possess essences distinct from their bodies and that such essences must know that Being whose existence is necessary. Such an essence could be neither a body nor something imprinted into a body of the kind with which his own essence was associated. The

essences of the heavenly objects must be innocent of corporeality. How could it be otherwise when he, subject as he was to weakness and dependence on sensual things and having a body subject to decay, nevertheless had an essence? His weaknesses in no way imposed corporeality upon his essence or made it subject to decay. It was obvious that the heavenly bodies were more deserving of essence than he was. He felt certain then that the heavenly bodies knew that Being whose existence is necessary and are witnessing Him continuously since they are free of the sensory interference which interrupted the continuity of his own witness.

The thought then struck him: why was he, alone among all the varieties of animal, favoured with an essence which was more like that of the heavenly bodies?

During his investigation into the nature of the elements he had discovered how they change into each other. He had seen that the cycle of creation and decay was continuous and that nothing on the face of the earth remains the same. He had seen that this could be attributed to the fact that almost all things are composed of a mixture of opposing constituents. Nothing which has physical existence is pure: but some things, like gold and sapphire, are close to absolute purity and in consequence are close to immunity from decay. The heavenly bodies, he thought, were simple and pure and far removed from decay and change of form.

He decided that all objects in the world of creation and decay could be fitted into two categories: (1) Those whose reality consists of matter and one additional factor, for example the four elements[12] and (2) Those whose reality consists of more than that, for example animals and plants. Those which have fewer forms have fewer actions and are further away from life.

The state of matter having no form or image (*hyle*) is one which offers no access to life and is similar to non-existence. Objects whose reality is based on a number of forms have greater possibility for action and enter more deeply into the state of life. That which is based on a single form, for example the four elements, is on the first step of existence in the world of creation and decay. From this stage, things with multiple forms are constructed. The four elements are weak in life content because they have only one kind of motion. They are also weak in life content for another reason: the essential nature of each is

[12] Water, fire, earth and air.

opposed by the essential nature of another, each always being impelled to try and change the nature of the other. Such a level of existence is not consolidated and its life content is feeble. Plants manifest a stronger level of life than this and animals a stronger level still.

Whenever a compound has one of the four elements dominant in it, this means that this element has proved strongest and has neutralized the others. Such a compound takes on the nature of the dominant element and thus deserves only a small entitlement to life. Those compounds which have no one element dominant have their elements balanced and in equilibrium. In such a compound no element has either vanquished another or been vanquished by it. Their actions, one on the other, are equal and balanced and no one element can impose its characteristics on the compound. Such a compound is completely unlike any one of its constituents and this balanced state attracts a greater measure of life. The further such union moves away from imbalance and towards equilibrium the more complete is the life which it can support.

The animal spirit which dwells in the heart is temperate, being more subtle than earth or water and more gross than fire or air. No element is dominant in any real sense and this makes the animal spirit essentially suitable for the animal form. This led him to believe that the most temperate animal spirit was the one best qualified for a complete life in the world of creation and decay.

Such a spirit would be close to a situation of total harmony and would be similar to the heavenly bodies which enjoy an absence of all opposition. The position of such a spirit would be one of balance between extremes, neither tending to ascend like fire nor to descend. And provided it did not decay, it would remain at this mean position, desiring neither to ascend nor descend. If it moved in space, it would revolve round a centre like the heavenly bodies. If it moved where it was, it would simply rotate. It would have a spherical shape and in this too it would be like the heavenly bodies.

He had long considered the behaviour of animals but had never observed anything to suggest that any of them was conscious of the Being whose existence is necessary. His own knowledge of that Being had come through his essence when it intimated that it could sense the Being. From all this it came to him that *he* must be the animal which possessed the temperate

and balanced spirit similar to the heavenly bodies. It was at this moment that he realized that he belonged to a species distinct from all the animals. He had been created for another purpose; and had been prepared for and was expected to perform a great work which was not required of the animals.

He felt greatly honoured that the lower of his two halves, his body, had similarities to the heavenly bodies which are outside the realm of being and decay and above imperfection, transformation and change. As for the nobler of his two parts, this was the essence through which he had come to know the Being whose existence is necessary. This knowing part is a lordly and divine thing which cannot be transformed and is not subject to decay. It cannot be described by anything which will describe material things. It is imperceptible to any of the senses. It cannot be imagined. And it cannot be known through anything but itself and is reached only by means of itself. It is alike the gnostic, the gnosis and gnosticism, the knower, the known, and the knowing. It cannot be divided into parts. Differentiation, contrast and separation are properties of material objects. Essence has no body, no qualities and no relationship to, or dependence on, a body.

When he realized that his relationship to the heavenly bodies was analogous to his relationship with the animals, he saw that it was his duty to accept them, to emulate their actions and to do his utmost to be like them.

He realized also that there was, in the finer part of himself, the part which had come to know the Being whose existence is necessary, a certain likeness to Him, in the sense that this part of him was above the nature of his body in the same way that this Being was above physical attributes. He saw it as his duty, therefore, to try and acquire His qualities in himself by all possible means; to take on His conduct and character; to emulate his actions; to spare no effort in executing His will; to surrender his affairs to Him; and to be pleased to accept all His judgements from within his heart, inwardly and outwardly in such a way as to be happy so to do, even if this were painful, or harmful or led even to the destruction of his body.

He recognized that through his lower part, his dense and dark physical body belonging to the world of creation and decay, he was linked to the animals, and like them he required a variety of sensual things like food and water and sex. He realized that this body was not created for him and linked to

him without good reason. It was incumbent upon him to look after it, care for it and preserve it. This could not be done without following the actions of the animals.

The guidelines for his life should therefore be threefold. He should imitate the animals. He should imitate and try to resemble the heavenly bodies. And he should try to imitate and come to resemble the Being whose existence is necessary. The first imitation was necessary because he had a dense physical body made of separate organs and subject to different forces and a variety of drives and desires. The second imitation was necessary because he had within him an animal spirit inhabiting his heart, this being the focus and source of all the powers of his body. The third imitation was obligatory upon him simply from being himself; that is, from being the essence through which he knew the Being whose existence is necessary. He already knew that his happiness and his conquest of misery could come only through the continued witness of this Being whose existence is necessary, and by doing so in such a fashion that he did not turn away from Him even for an instant.

He reviewed the measures through which this continuous vision could be achieved and understood that he must implement the three forms of imitation.

The first imitation is necessary to preserve the animal spirit, through which the second imitation (that of the heavenly bodies) can be effected. But the first imitation does not of itself lead to any vision and is, in fact, an obstacle to its achievement. It involves management of sensory matters and all sensations are as screens obstructing that vision. Necessity therefore obliged him to take this path though it is not one free from harm.

The second imitation provided him with a good deal of continuous witnessing but the vision here was marred by an impurity. In this case, the one experiencing still remains attentive to the self.

The third imitation achieves pure witnessing and no attention is given to anything except the Being whose existence is necessary. Whoever experiences this vision finds that the essence of his self disappears, vanishes, is annihilated. All the other selves, few or many, also vanish leaving only the essence of the One, the Truth, whose existence is necessary. Honour exhaltation and glory to Him.

His ultimate aim was the third form of imitation, but it was

clear to him that he could not acquire it before he had spent a long time practising and working at the second form. The second form, in turn, depended on proficiency in the first form; but he understood that the first form, though definitely necessary and indirectly a help, was primarily an impediment. He therefore decided not to allow his self more than the necessary amount of the first imitation; this being the minimum without which the animal spirit cannot survive.

For the survival of the animal spirit he saw two things were necessary—nutrition which would replace the body tissues lost by ordinary breakdown and decay and also a suitable environment offering protection from excessive heat and cold and from interference by animals and the like. If he estimated the minimum requirements of these, he saw that he might easily exceed what was strictly necessary and this could lead him, without realizing it, to work against himself. So he set himself limits which he decided never to exceed. But he needed to know the nature of his nutritional requirements, how much he really required and how often.

He listed the types of food he ate and found there were three: plants which had not yet come to full ripeness, like vegetables: plants which had completed their cycle and produced seed so as to continue their species; and the land and sea creatures which he ate.

He was already convinced that all these creatures were the creation of that Being whose existence is necessary. His own highest happiness lay in being close to Him and imitating Him. But when he fed on fruit or animals, he must inevitably terminate the journey on which such creatures were themselves engaged and thus prevent them from achieving the aim intended for them. To eat them must obstruct the intention of the Creator and this was incompatible with his own aim of imitating Him and being near Him. One possible solution would be to stop eating, but this raised a stronger objection. If he stopped eating his body would disintegrate and he would not be able to achieve his own aim; and this, he thought, must be higher and nobler than the aim of the creatures he had to destroy to survive.

He decided to choose the lesser of two evils and take such action as offered the least opposition to the Creator. He would select from all possible varieties of food available a certain quantity for himself, a quantity he had still to decide. If suf-

ficient variety were available, he would select only those things whose destruction by him would offer least opposition to the intention of the Creator; for example ripe fruit whose seed would still be available to reproduce their kind, provided they did not find inhospitable conditions such as salty or rocky soil. If quantities of this sort of sustenance—for example apples and pears—were insufficient, he would then use either fruit whose seeds themselves provided nutrition—walnuts and chestnuts for example—or he would use vegetables which had not reached the limit of their growth. In the latter case he would confine himself to those which were most abundant and most capable of further reproduction and he would be careful not to destroy their roots or seed. If none of the foregoing was available, he would allow himself to draw upon animals or their eggs. In this case he would use only the most abundant kinds and would be careful never to wipe out a whole species. As for the quantity he would permit himself, he decided it should be just enough to assuage the pangs of hunger. As for how often, he decided he would not return to food until it became apparent to him that such ordinary activities as were essential for the second form of imitation were becoming impaired.

The minimum measures to protect him from the external environment and so to ensure the survival of the animal spirit were easily contrived. He already dressed in animal skins and had a shelter which protected him from the weather. This was adequate and he felt he should not become too closely identified with such things. The rules of diet on which he had decided, he now put into practice.

He next turned his attention to the second form of imitation, that of emulating the heavenly bodies, and he saw this in three ways. The first was to emulate the qualities which they have additional to those of the world of creation and decay. They contributed heating, occasionally cooling, to the environment; they provided illumination and they provided evaporation and condensation and other actions which prepare the world for the emanation upon it of the spiritual images of the Causer whose existence is necessary. The second category concerned the qualities which the heavenly bodies had by virtue of their essence. They were transparent, shimmering, pure and above impurities and defects and they had circular motions centred either upon themselves or upon other heavenly bodies. The third division referred to the qualities which they have in

relation to the Being whose existence is necessary. They gave perpetual witness of Him, they were dedicated to implementing His will and they moved only in response to His will and direction.

In conformity with the first category of qualities he imitated the heavenly bodies by imposing upon himself an obligation to help, whenever he was able, anything hurt or injured or in need; and to remove or reduce any impediment from which an animal or plant was suffering. Thus if he found a plant obscured from the sun by a screen of some sort he would remove the obstruction. If he found a plant which was being weighed down by the growth of another plant, he would gently separate them and if he saw a plant seriously in need of water, he tried to provide some. If he found an animal overcome after an attack by another animal or suffering from a thorn in its flesh, or suffering from hunger or thirst, he did all in his power to help.

If he saw water flowing towards a place where plants were growing and the flow was obstructed by a fallen stone or a slip of earth, he would rectify the situation. He kept on with this form of imitation until he excelled at it. As to the second category, he imitated the heavenly bodies by imposing upon himself constant purity. He removed dirt and impurities from his body by washing frequently in water. He cleaned his nails and teeth and his body orifices and he perfumed his body with sweet smelling plants and natural resins. He cleaned and scented the skins he wore as clothes until he glowed with comeliness, beauty, cleanliness and fragrance. He also undertook various circular motions, sometimes circling the island along its beaches and creeks, sometimes circling his shelter or some large rock a given number of times, either walking or jogging. Sometimes he spun round until he fainted.

As for the third category, he imitated the heavenly bodies by maintaining his thoughts on the Being whose existence is necessary and cutting off all connection with the sensory world. He would close his eyes, plug his ears and try to halt his imagination by applying all his energy to thinking of nothing but Him, trying to prevent any other thought from mixing with the thought of Him. He found he could assist this by spinning rapidly. When he spun rapidly enough all sensory things faded away to vanishing point and his imagination and all that requires the instruments of sense became wakened. Awareness of his essence, which is innocent of the body, would then

increase. From time to time his thoughts would be cleansed of all impurities and he would then witness the Being whose existence is necessary. However, the bodily forces would then reassert themselves, spoiling his state and bringing him back to the low sensory level. When this happened he would start all over again, but if weakness overcame his so that it seriously impeded his efforts, he would then eat some food according to the limits which he had set himself.

He continued this regimen for some time, fighting his bodily powers and they fighting him. Even when he had overcome them and his thoughts were unmarred by impurities and he could glimpse something of the state of the third imitation, the bodily powers still struggled to reassert themselves.

He then started to strive for the third form of imitation. Before the period of his practical approach, he had already discovered by theoretical and intellectual consideration that the qualities of the Being whose existence is necessary are of two types. The first includes the qualities of permanence such as knowledge, power and wisdom. The second are the negative qualities such as being above and beyond any association with matter and its qualities.

The quality of permanence requires transcendence over matter, since one of the qualities of physical matter is plurality and His essence is not multiple. All His attributes reduce to one, the reality of His essence. So he had to learn to imitate Him in each of these two ways.

Considering first the positive qualities he had to imitate, he realized that they were not many but only one. The awareness by Him of His own essence is not something additional to His essence. His essence IS His consciousness of His own essence: His knowledge of His essence IS His essence. If therefore he could come to know His essence, then the knowledge with which he came to know it would not be something distinct from His essence. It would be Him! Thus the third imitation, based on His positive qualities, means simply knowing Him without associating Him with any material or physical qualities. This he would strive to do. And as for the negative qualities, all these reduced simply to transcending the qualities of physical matter.

He began then to try and rid his essence of physical qualities. Much had already been discarded through the exercises he had done in imitation of the heavenly bodies but much still

remained. He still employed rotary motion and this was a cardinal quality of objects. He still exercised kindness to plants and animals and this again was physical since he used physical senses to see their situation and used physical means to take action. He resolved to cast all this from him, seeing that in its totality it was unworthy of the state he sought.

He continued to cultivate solitude in his cave, head bent, eyes closed, unaware of all sensual objects and bodily forces, struggling only to concentrate on the Being whose existence is necessary.

Whenever his imagination produced an image he would strive to banish it with all his might. Sometimes he persisted so intensely in trying to bring his self under control that days would pass during which he neither ate nor even moved.

During such an intense struggle all physical and material things vanished from his mind with one exception—his awareness of himself. Even while witnessing the first Being, the Truth, whose existence is necessary, awareness of himself remained. This disturbed him, for he recognized it as an imperfection in total witnessing, an association within his observation.

He continued to strive for sincerity in witnessing and for the annihilation of his self, and finally achieved it. The heavens and the earth and all that lies between them[13] vanished from his thoughts and his memory. So also did spiritual visions, bodily forces and all the non-material forces which are the essences conscious of that Being which is Truth; and his own essence vanished with them. All became scattered as dust,[14] shrunk, vanished. Only the Truth, the One, the Being whose existence is permanent, remained. As he says through His words, which add nothing to His essence: 'For whom is the dominion today? It is for Allah, the One, the victorious!'[15] Though he was ignorant of these words and lacked human speech, he nevertheless understood these words and hearkened to His call. Immersed in this state, he saw what eyes have not seen nor ears heard, neither has human heart experienced.

Do not attach your desires to something that can be described but has not occurred in the human heart. Certain experiences can reach the heart which cannot be described. How much less

[13] *The Koran*, surat Almadah, 20; surat Alhijur, 85; surat Alnaba, 37.

[14] *The Koran*, surat Al Waqia'ah, 6.

[15] *The Koran*, surat Almomin, 16.

can a state be described which the heart cannot receive, this state being beyond the nature of the heart or its world?

By 'heart' I do not mean the physical heart, nor do I mean the spirit that resides there. What I mean is the form of that spirit which diffuses its powers through the human body. All of these three can be called a 'heart' but the state being indicated could not occur in any of them since description can refer only to what happens in these.

Explaining this state which he had reached is impossible. Any attempt is like someone trying to taste a colour and requiring that black, say, is to be sweet or sour. We shall not leave you, however, entirely without signs which may point to what he saw of the wonders of that stage—but as an analogy only and not as a knock on the door of the truth. The only way to verify that state is to reach it.

Hearken then with the hearing of your heart and stare with the vision of your mind at what I point out to you. Perhaps you will find in it guidance which will lead you on the proper path. I make only one condition: that you do not ask for further verbal description beyond what I am setting down on these pages; because the limits are fine and the strict control of expression on a matter which is beyond being put into words is a dangerous concern.

So, he was annihilated beyond his essence and beyond all other essences and could see within existence nothing but the One, the Living, the Self-subsisting; and he saw what he saw. When he awoke from this state, which is not unlike inebriation, and returned, he again saw other things. He realized that his own essence was no different from the Truth most high and that the reality of his own essence is the essence of Truth. He saw also that that which he had at first thought to be his essence and distinct from the essence of Truth was in reality, nothing at all, for there is nothing other than the essence of the Truth.

An analogy would be light from the sun falling on dense bodies and apparently coming from them. In reality, it is nothing but the light of the sun. When the sun vanishes, the light vanishes. The light of the sun however remains intact and is neither reduced by the presence of the object nor increased by its absence. When a body suitable for registering the light of the sun appears, it receives the light. When that body disintegrates its reception of the light vanishes also and no longer has any meaning. It was apparent to him that the essence of

Truth—may He be exalted and glorified—never in any sense becomes multiple. His knowledge of His essence is His essence itself. He could therefore see that whoever acquires the *knowledge* of His essence also acquires His essence. As he had already acquired the knowledge, he had acquired the essence. Now this essence is not acquired except as itself; the act of acquiring it is the essence. He *was* now that essence, as were all the non-material essences which also knew Him. These he had earlier seen as a multiplicity but now knew were one.

This idea of multiplicity had come close to being fixed within him but Allah had responded with His mercy and, through his guidance, his thoughts had been put right. He then understood that such thoughts of multiplicity were generated in him merely because of the dark and impure influence of things physical and sensual. The concept of many and few; of the unit; of combination and collectedness; of separation—all these are merely the qualities of material objects. Nor should the non-material essences be described as one or many—they who, through their innocence of matter, know the Truth, glory and exaltation to Him. Multiplicity is the contrasting of essences one with another; unity can be achieved only through union. The reality of all this is incomprehensible if we try to use concepts based on the relationship of material objects.

Possibilities for suggesting the real situation are limited in the extreme. If one refers to the non-material essences in the plural, as we have done, this implies that they are a multiplicity. But they are innocent of multiplicity. If one refers to them in the singular, this implies that they are not a unity, and it is impossible for them not to be a unity.

Whoever stops at this stage is like a bat blinded by the sun, which rushes about in its madness and says to itself: 'You have gone so into excess with your scrutinizing that you have left the nature of the sane and shed the judgement of reason; a thing must be either one or many'. But let the bat control the excesses of his tongue. Let him rather accuse himself of failing to do what Hai bin Yaqzan did. Though enfolded in the low world of the senses, he used these senses to consider the situation from both points of view. He considered from one point of view and found unbounded multiplicity. He considered from another point of view and found unity. On the two viewpoints he reserved judgement.

The world of the senses is the source of plurality and of singu-

larity, and only within the world of the senses do such concepts have a meaning. The sensory world yields a picture of separation and union, of agreement and disagreement, of accretion and dispersion. Any thoughts he had about the divine world which involved 'all' or 'some' or were capable of being conveyed in language, were necessarily imaginary and did not accord with reality. Only they know, who experience and witness. The real nature of Truth is ascertained only by those who acquire it. As for the saying, 'You have left the nature of the sane and have shed the judgement of reason', let us grant the bat this and leave him with his logic and intellect.

For those who speak like this, mind is only the verbal power which examines the individual units in the world of the senses and arrives thereby at a general overall concept. The men of reason are those who think and reason in this way. Our words are beyond all that. So let him who knows no more than the world of the senses, shut his ears and return to his kind, who 'know but the outer things in the life of his world: but of the end of things they are heedless.[16]

So if you are one of those who can be convinced by the kind of sign and hint I have given as to what the divine world contains, and if you do not attach to our words the common and customary meanings associated with them, then we shall give you more of what Hai bin Yaqzan saw in the station of the Friends of the Truth.

After he had experienced total annihilation, absorption, true arrival and union, he saw the highest sphere which has no physical body. He saw there an essence innocent of matter which was neither the essence of the One, the Truth, nor was it the essence of the highest sphere; nor was it different from these. It could be compared to the image of the sun as seen in a polished mirror. It is neither the sun nor the mirror nor is it anything other than them. He saw signs of such perfection, glory and beauty in the essence of that non-material sphere so great as to be beyond description; too fine, too delicate to be clothed in letters or sound. In a state of ultimate pleasure, happiness, gladness and joy, his vision showed him the essence of Truth, glory be to His Majesty.

Just below the sphere just mentioned he saw another, the sphere of the fixed stars. Its essence too, was innocent of matter. This was not the essence of the One, the Truth, nor was it the

[16] *The Koran*, surat Alrum, 7.

essence of the highest sphere; nor was it either the same or other than they. It was not unlike a reflection of the sun as it appears in a mirror which has an image reflected on it from another mirror, which is facing the sun. In this essence he saw as much glory, beauty and pleasure as he had seen in the highest sphere.

At the next sphere, the sphere of Saturn, he saw a non-material essence which was not of the essences he had seen before nor was it different from them. It was like the image of the sun as it appears in a mirror that has received its image from another mirror which in turn has received its image from a mirror facing the sun. In respect of this essence he saw what he had seen in respect of the others, as to glory and pleasure.

He witnessed, for each sphere in turn, a non-material essence which was not of the preceding essences nor was it other than they were. He saw the arrangement as similar to the image of the sun reflected from one mirror to another in a certain sequence and he witnessed for each of these essences such glory, beauty, pleasure and joy as no eye has seen and no ear heard and no heart has ever imagined.

He descended finally to the world of creation and decay and saw that all of it was within the bowels of the sphere of the moon. This, he saw, had a non-material essence which was not of, or different from, the essences he had witnessed before. This essence had seventy thousand faces. In each face there were seventy thousand mouths and in each mouth seventy thousand tongues each glorifying and praising unceasingly the essence of the One, the Truth. In this essence, which gave him the impression of multiplicity but was not multiple, he saw such perfection and pleasure as he had seen in the previous ones. This essence appeared as the image from the last mirror in a series, starting with a first mirror facing the sun. He then saw a separate essence and had it been permissible to identify individuals among the seventy thousand faces he would have said that this was his own and he was one of them. Had this essence not been brought into being out of non-being he would have said that it was. And had it not been designated to his body at the time of his creation, he would have said that it did not come into being. In this gradation he saw essences not unlike his own, which had belonged to bodies which had been and gone. And he also saw essences that belonged to bodies which were still with him in the world of creation. They were of such

quantity that if multiplicity could apply to essences, then their number was infinite. Otherwise they were one. For his own and for all other essences in the same rank he saw beauty, glory and limitless pleasure such as no eye has seen or ear heard or human heart conceived, indescribable and incomprehensible to all but the gnostics (the Sufis)—those who arrive.

He also saw many non-material essences which were like rusted mirrors, tarnished with dirt and turning their faces away from the polished mirrors which reflect the sun. In these essences he saw ugliness and error of unimaginable degree. He saw that they were in unending pain and he heard sighing he could never forget. He saw that they were in torture chambers being burned with the fire of the veil and ripped by saws of attraction and repulsion.

Beside the essences of the tormented ones he saw others which appeared and then disappeared, forming and then vanishing. He concentrated so as to examine this situation closely and understood that it amounted to something very serious—a calamity. It involved forming and reforming, serious (mis)judgements and hurried creations. It involved the creative breath.

Slowly he took hold of himself and his senses returned, as if he were awakening from a faint. As he returned to the world of the senses, his hold on his previous state was lost and the divine world receded; for both cannot be present in the same state. The world of creation and the other world are like a man with two wives; if he pleases one, he angers the other.

I expect you will now want to question me along the following lines: you will conclude from what I have described of this vision that the non-material essences are permanent if they belong to a non-decaying body like a star. And that they decay, shrink and vanish if they belong to a decaying body, like a talking animal, as may be understood from the analogy of the reflecting mirrors. Because, of course, the image is dependent on the permanence of the mirror and if the mirror decays, the image decays and vanishes. If you do have such questions in mind you are forgetting the terms I laid down. We have told you that the scope of words is very limiting and they will always be liable to convey an impression which falls short of the truth. You must not fall into the error of equating the real and the analogous. Even in ordinary speech this is not admissible: how much less so in a matter like this?

The sun and its light, its form and formation; the mirrors and the images reflected in them—none of this can take form without a body and without a body cannot exist. All these manifestations require the presence of bodies and cease to manifest when the bodies are destroyed.

As for the divine essences and lordly spirits, they are all innocent of bodies and bodily attributes and are utterly above such considerations. To such essences, the permanence of bodies, the existence or non-existence of bodies is of no consequence because they are connected and linked with the essence of the One, the Truth, the Being whose existence is necessary. He is their First, their Origin, Cause and Creator.

He gave them permanence and supplies them with everlasting existence. They do not need bodies: bodies need them. If it were possible for them to perish, bodies would perish too, for bodies have their origin through them. Similarly, if it were possible for the One, the Truth, to perish—exalted and holy is He and above such a contingency, there is no God but He—then all essences would perish also and with the essences bodies and the world of sense would instantly perish and not a single being would remain. Everything is linked together and the world of sense, though a function of the divine world, is like its shadow. The divine world is innocent of the world of sense and independent of it; but nevertheless it is not possible to declare that the sensory world is non-existent, for it is beyond all doubt related to the divine world. The decay of the sensory world lies in its change, not in its total destruction.

The Holy Book speaks of this when it mentions setting the mountains in motion and reducing them to tufts of carded wool[17] and of people being scattered like moths; of the collapse of the sun and moon; the seas exploding and the earth being replaced with another earth and sky.

This is the total extent of what I am able to relate to you of what Hai bin Yaqzan witnessed while in that elevated state we have described. Do not ask any further amplification in words: this is not possible.

And now, Allah willing, I shall relate the remainder of the story of Hai bin Yaqzan. When he returned to the world of the senses, after his sojourn in the other world, he found the needs of the mundane world increasingly irksome; and his longing for the other world became stronger. He attempted to regain the

[17] *The Koran*, surat Alqari'ah, 4.

state he longed for and found that he could now attain it with less effort than had previously been necessary and he could also remain in it for a longer period. After returning to the world of the senses he tried, after an interval, to return yet again to the high state and discovered that doing so was again slightly easier and the period of time he could sustain it was longer still. Ultimately he could reach that state whenever he wanted to and remain in it for as long as he wished. In fact he now remained there altogether except when obliged to attend to his bodily needs and these he had now reduced to a bare minimum. He now wished that Allah—glory and exaltation be to Him—would relieve him altogether of the body which forced him to leave his high station. He would then be able to concentrate totally upon divine pleasure and would be free of the pain he experienced whenever he had to return to attend to the needs of his body. This remained his condition until he had completed seven times seven years from the time of his emergence. It was then that he came upon and befriended Asal and, Allah willing, we shall now tell you their story.

There is a tradition that close to the island on which Hai lived there was another island. According to one of the two traditions about how Hai came to be on that island, this other island had a sect of people who followed a true religion brought to them by one of the early prophets—Allah's blessing be upon all of them. This religion was devised so as to project into the world of the senses examples which would parallel events in the higher world and be as the shadows of the real events. The intention, and this is the normal tradition, was to provide the multitude with a shadow of real events capable of fixing an image of these real events in the human self. This religious sect spread on the island and increased in numbers and importance till the king of the island accepted its teaching and induced the whole population to do likewise.

Now two fine and good natured youths, who were dedicated to good works, grew up on this island. One was called Asal and the other Salaman. Both had been brought up in that religion and had absorbed its teachings very well. They undertook to adhere to it and to conform to all its laws and rules and rituals. This made them friends and constant companions.

Both of them from time to time studied the parts of their scripture which described Allah—glory and exaltation be to Him—His angels, the resurrection, the reward and the punish-

ment. Asal went more deeply into the hidden contents of the scriptures and detected spiritual meanings that were not obvious at surface level. Salaman on the other hand clung to the obvious, literal meanings and avoided possible analogies and interpretations. Both however observed faithfully the ritual requirements of their religion and struggled to control the desires, fancies and passions of their selves.

Now the tenets of this religion had certain passages which indicated that achievement in the spiritual world could be reached by solitude and isolation. On the other hand, other passages indicated a route through close community and fellowship. Asal's nature inclined to the way of solitude and thought; this being in line with his natural inclination to delve for deeper meaning by reflection and thinking. Salaman, by contrast, favoured the way of community and decided that this way was right for him, since it was his nature to avoid independent thought and action. Constant association with his group gave him the means of dispelling certain doubts and objections which arose in him and allowed him to ward off the whispering of devils. This divergence of view was the cause of Asal and Salaman becoming separated.

Asal had heard of an island (the one in fact which tradition says Hai was brought up on) and understood it to have a temperate climate and fertile resources. Here, he thought, solitude would be possible for whoever sought it. He decided he would go there and forsake human company for the rest of his life. He realized what resources he had and with some of the money hired a boat to take him to the island. The rest of the money he distributed among the poor and needy. He then said goodbye to his friend Salaman and was taken on his hired boat to the other island where the sailors left him on the shore and then sailed for home.

On the island, Asal worshipped Allah—glory and exaltation be to Him—glorifying and sanctifying Him, contemplating His most beautiful names and His high attributes. No distractions marred his contemplations. He ate of what the island offered in fruit and game whenever he needed food, but took only enough to still his hunger. He remained like this for some time in joy and intimacy from his communion with his Lord. Daily he saw signs of Allah's kindness and bounty in easing his wants and providing his sustenance and this assured him that he had been right in putting his trust in Allah.

Meanwhile Hai was completely absorbed in his lofty station. He left his cave only once a week or so, to get whatever food he could find. For this reason Asal did not come across him at all during his early days on the island. Asal had roamed the length and breadth of the island and found no trace of another human being, a circumstance which gratified him and satisfied his requirement of privacy and solitude.

One day however Hai had emerged to look for food and Asal happened to be in that area. They saw each other. Asal at once assumed that Hai was another anchorite who had come to the island like himself to find solitude. He was afraid that if he took steps to meet him and introduce himself, he would interrupt his state and defeat his desire for solitude. As for Hai, he could not understand what Asal was, for he had never once encountered on the island anything with the remotest similarity to himself. Asal wore a black linen and wool cloak which Hai assumed was his natural hair and this made him stop and peer in amazement. Asal on the other hand thought only of moving away quickly in case he disturbed the other's state. Hai, responding to his innate desire to get to the bottom of things, at once gave chase but when he saw that the other was seriously concerned to get away, he slowed down and took cover. Asal, now well beyond the area in which they had met, assumed he had lost his pursuer and sat down to pray and recite and call on the Lord and perform his other devotions. Presently he was fully absorbed and unmindful of anything else. Bit by bit Hai drew near to him till he was close enough to hear his recitations and invocations and to see his supplications and tears. What Hai heard was a pleasant voice and an ordered sound the like of which he had never heard from any animal. He looked at the other's form and features and saw a great similarity to his own. He also saw that the other's cloak was much like the one he used himself. He understood the other's humbleness and degree of submission, recognized the sincerity of his tears and concluded that Asal must be one of the essences which have the Truth. He felt drawn to him and had a desire to know more about him and the cause of his tears and supplications. But as he moved closer, Asal sensed his presence and at once took off. He ran as fast as he could with Hai close behind him but was no match for the strength and plenitude of mind and body which Allah had given Hai and was soon overtaken and pinned down.

Asal looked at Hai. He saw a creature covered with hairy

animal skins, whose body was largely shrouded in long flowing hair which had never been cut. Having experienced the speed and strength of this creature he was, not unnaturally, extremely frightened and began to plead with him in words which Hai could in no way comprehend. Hai, however, sensed Asal's fear and tried to reassure him with sounds he had learned from the animals and by gently stroking his hair, alternating this with smiles and gestures of friendliness. When he realized that Hai meant him no harm, Asal calmed down.

Now Asal had long been interested in the science of communication and had mastered a number of languages. He now tried to converse with Hai, using every language he knew, without success. He also tried to understand the sounds Hai was making to him and was equally unsuccessful. Hai, meanwhile, was both astonished and delighted at all the words he was hearing. Though he was unable to understand any of them, he kept showing how pleased and happy he was. Thus each was both surprised and puzzled by the other.

Asal had with him the remains of some of the food he had brought from his own island and this he offered to Hai, who had no idea what it was, having never seen anything like it before. Asal ate a little of it, making signs for Hai to do likewise. Hai however tried to obey the rules about eating which he had set for himself and not knowing, in any case, the origin of the food Asal was offering him, refused.

Asal persisted in offering it and pleaded with him to take it. Hai had already felt affection for this fellow human being and was afraid that if he persisted in refusing he might anger and alienate the other. So finally he took a little of the food and ate it. He at once regretted breaking his own rule, though he enjoyed the taste very much. He felt he should now leave Asal and go back to an attempt to reach the state of witnessing—something which always took time. On the other hand it might be better to remain with Asal in the world of the senses till he could discover the truth about him. He would then be able to return to his honourable station without distraction. So he decided to remain for the time being with Asal.

When Asal realized that Hai could not talk, he was in a sense relieved. This meant that Hai would not be able to interfere with his religious practices. Also, he might be able to teach him speech, perhaps even science and religion and so earn the favour of Allah and win the greatest reward.

So Asal started to teach Hai. First he would point to an object and say its name, then repeat it and persuade Hai to try to pronounce the sound. Hai would then point to the object and make an attempt at the word. Little by little he induced Hai to speak and in a surprisingly short time Hai knew the names of many objects. When they had enough language in common, Asal began to question Hai about his origins. Hai explained that he did not know how his life began and did not remember a mother or a father, only the doe which had reared him. Gradually he was able to explain his life in more detail and went on to describe his quest for knowledge and how he had finally attained the rank of those who have arrived.

When Asal heard Hai describe the divine truths and the essences which were independent of the world of the senses he was much moved. Hai described the essences which were acquainted with the essence of the Truth, glory and exaltation be to Him, exalted and most high be He with his most beautiful names. He described what he witnessed when he arrived at the holy station; the pleasures of those who arrive and the pains of those who remain veiled from Him. Asal had now no doubt that all the things mentioned in the law of his own religion pertaining to Allah—glory and exaltation be to Him—His angels, His holy books, His prophets, the day of judgement, His paradise and hell were all similar to what Hai had witnessed. The vision of his heart was opened and the fire of his thoughts kindled. Tradition and reason coincided within him. The diverse ways of interpreting the scripture began to converge in meaning and no problem in jurisprudence remained obscure. Every door was unlocked, every mystery illuminated till he became one of those with hearts of understanding. From then on he looked at Hai with respect and reverence, sure that he was a Wali, a close friend of Allah, one of those 'On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.[18] So he decided to serve and emulate Hai and when any issue arose concerning the religious practices he had learned from his sect, to follow Hai's direction. Hai in turn questioned Asal about his affairs. Asal described his own island, its people and how they behaved now that that religion was well established.

Asal detailed to him all that their scripture described of the divine world; of hell and heaven; of rebirth and resurrection; of the gathering; of the judgement; of the balance and of the

[18] *The Koran*, surat Albaqara 261

straight path. Hai understood all this effortlessly and saw nothing at all that diverged from what he had seen in his holy station. He realized that whoever had given such a description to the people was truthful in his description and spoke with veracity. Such a one was a messenger from his Lord and Hai believed in him and endorsed his words and bare witness to his messengership. He asked Asal then about the obligatory disciplines the messenger had brought and what form of worship was assigned to each. Asal described prayer, alms, fasting, pilgrimage and other external practices. Hai accepted these and resolved to practise them, undertaking to perform these rituals in obedience to the command of one whom he accepted as a truthful witness.

On two aspects of the religion Asal described, he was, however, doubtful, being unable to penetrate what wisdom lay behind them. The first was this messenger's use of analogies and parables in most of his description of things in the divine world; his reluctance to give direct revelation. This, Hai felt, had led the people to materialize the concepts and hence assign to the essence of Truth attributes of which he was totally innocent. There was also the matter of reward and punishment. The second thing which puzzled him was why the messenger had confined duty to the obligatory prayers and rituals and allowed the accumulation of wealth, and over-indulgence in eating, so that people were distracted by such follies from the Truth.

His own understanding was that people should eat only the bare minimum which would sustain them. As for money—this had no meaning for him. He saw that the religious law gave details about conduct in money matters, alms, welfare, administration, selling and charging interest and gave allowable limits for these and punishments for transgressions. All this astonished him and he found it unncessarily elaborate. He told Asal 'Had the people understood the truth of such matters, they would have refrained from such follies, forsaken them and turned instead to the Truth. None would have a private fortune requiring taxation nor would anyone risk the loss of his hand for stealing, or lose his life in the attempt to seize property openly.'

Hai had been driven to this point of view by his assumption that people had inborn good sense, high intelligence and determination. He had no experience of people and in consequence

did not know that they were really lazy, full of shortcomings and unsupported opinions and weak in their resolve; that they are in fact not unlike cattle and are worse astray from the path.[19]

Hai felt a great pity for mankind and wondered if he might be the means of their salvation. He toyed with the idea of getting to the other island and explaining the Truth to the people. He discussed with Asal the possibility of getting there but Asal was against the idea, explaining how people lacked an inborn sense of rightness and how they had rejected the message of Allah. Hai couldn't comprehend that people were really like this and couldn't give up his idea of helping them. Asal had at the back of his mind the idea that Allah might permit him to be the instrument whereby a number of his old acquaintances who were closer to deliverance than the others could be brought to the Truth, so finally he agreed to Hai's proposal.

They decided to remain by the sea shore, night and day, and hope that Allah would provide the means of crossing the sea. This they did and prayed to Allah for guidance. So it was that, by the command of Allah, a ship was blown off course and lost its way and was carried by the pounding waves to a point just off the coast of the island. From there, the sailors saw two men on the island and, bringing the ship closer in, were able to talk to them. They agreed to Asal's request to take them on board and undertook to carry them to the other island. Thanks to a fair wind which Allah sent to them, they made the passage to the other island in good time. The pair disembarked and made their way to the city.

There Asal's old friends soon gathered round them and when he told them the story of Hai, they all honoured Hai, marvelled at him and showed him respect. Asal confided to Hai that this group was, of all the population, highest in intelligence and understanding and that if he found he was unable to teach them, it would certainly be impossible to teach the main body of the people.

Now the head man of the island, and the most respected, was Asal's old friend Salaman, who believed that the Way lay within a community and not in isolation and withdrawal from society. Hai now started to teach them and to reveal to them the secrets of wisdom; but no sooner had his exposition risen above the purely literal level and he began to explain matters which

[19] *The Koran*, surat Alfurqan, 44.

they had previously understood differently, than they recoiled from him in disgust, condemning him in their hearts. If they appeared to accept him in their outward behaviour, this was only because of their tradition of hospitality to strangers and because Hai was a friend of Asal.

They were distracted from their remembrance of Allah by their trading and selling and they did not fear a day when their hearts and eyes will be transformed.[20] It then became clear to him beyond any doubt that addressing them openly was not possible and no more work could be expected from them. He realized that for the majority of people, their share in the benefit of religion was confined to their ordinary everyday lives. It stabilized their existence so that one does not attack another or steal his belongings. Only exceptionally and very rarely would any one of them win the happiness of the other world. These would be they who truly seek the harvest of the next world and strive for it with all due striving and have faith.[21]

Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds and had preferred the life of this world, the abode will be hell-fire;[22] and is there a greater burden and a misery more complete than that of one who, if you examine his actions from the time of his awakening from his sleep to the moment he returns to it, you would find none which is not aimed at acquiring one of these low and sensual affairs; either money to accumulate or a pleasure to reap or a desire to fulfil or an anger to quench or a position to reach or a religious function he performs to show off or to fend with it for the safety of his neck. All of that is darkness, one above another in a vast deep open.[23] 'Not one of you will pass over it; this is, with your Lord, a decree which must be accomplished.'[24]

When he finally understood the true nature of people and that the majority are in a state similar to that of dumb animals, he realized that all wisdom and guidance and the only chance of success lies in what the messengers have conveyed and what the religious law has provided and that nothing more is possible. The situation cannot support more. For each work

[20] *The Koran*, surat Alnur, 37.
[21] *The Koran*, surat Bani Israil, 20.
[22] *The Koran*, surat Al Naziaat, 37, 38, 39.
[23] *The Koran*, surat Al Nur, 40.
[24] *The Koran*, surat Mariam, 71.

there is a suitable man and each person's job, for which he was created, is made easy for him '[such has been] the practice [approved] of Allah already in the past; no change will you find in the practice [approved] of Allah'.[25]

Hai persevered in teaching them day and night and showing them the way of Truth both openly and secretly. But although they were a people who loved the good and wanted the truth, Hai's teaching seemed only to induce more and more discord among them. Owing to their lack of native good sense, they did not want to seek the Truth in the way He had indicated nor by experiencing Him nor entering by the door He had provided. They did not want to come to Him through His exponents. Finally Hai despaired of guiding them and his hope for their reform was brought to nothing because of the minute extent to which they would accept his teaching.

After this experience, Hai examined all classes of people and found that each sect 'rejoices in that which is with itself'[26] and have taken their whims and fancies as their Gods, worshipped their lusts and passions, and even laid down their lives to accumulate the worthless things of this world. 'The mutual rivalry for piling up [the good things of this world] diverts you [from more serious things] until ye visit the graves.'[27] Neither the good world nor the sermon works on them and arguments only make them adamant. Wisdom finds no path to them nor have they a chance of any of it. Overwhelmed with ignorance and on their hearts the stain of [the ill] which they do.[28] Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty they [incur].[29]

Hai saw that the torture chamber was already surrounding them and the darkness of the veil engulfing them. With a very few exceptions all seemed to adhere to their religion only as a means of advancing in the world and had discarded its rituals though these were light and easy—'And purchased it with some miserable gain.'[30]

So Hai turned back to Salaman and his friends and apologized for what he had said and recanted his previous teaching,

[25] *The Koran*, surat Al Fatih, 23.
[26] *The Koran*, surat Almuninun, 53.
[27] *The Koran*, surat Altakathur, 142.
[28] *The Koran*, surat Almutafifin, 14.
[29] *The Koran*, surat Albaqarah, 6.
[30] *The Koran*, surat Al Aumran, 187.

telling them that he had now been guided and saw that the opinions they held were correct. He advised them to remain within the boundaries of their religious law and rituals and to avoid engaging in things which did not concern them. He advised them also to have faith and to accept some of their traditions on which doubts had been cast; to refrain from new trends and new interpretations; to emulate their righteous ancestors and leave all innovations alone. But he ordered them to avoid the error into which a large part of the population had fallen—that of neglecting their religion and concentrating on the affairs of the world. This he stressed very strongly.

Hai and Asal both knew that this was the only course to advise for this aspiring but wrongly prepared sect. Hai realized that to raise any group to a level it cannot sustain, to bring it to the heights of vision, would merely make it unstable. It would be unable to reach further to the stage of the happy ones and its fall would be great. If, on the other hand, such a group of people maintained the religious practices they had until certainty came to them, then they would win security and be amongst the companions of the Right Hand; and those foremost (in faith) will be foremost (in the hereafter)—those will be nearest to Allah.[31]

So they said goodbye to these people and sought means to return to their island till Allah—glory and exaltation be to Him—provided the means.

Hai sought his holy station through the methods he had used before and was able to return to it. Asal imitated him until he came very close to the same. Both worshipped Allah until certainty came to them.

This is—may Allah support us and you with a spirit from Him—what there is of the tale of Hai bin Yaqzan and Asal and Salaman. It has included material which is to be found neither in books nor in ordinary conversation. Such material is part of the hidden knowledge, acceptable only to those who are aware of Allah and unacceptable to those who are unaware of Him. We have gone against the practice of our honourable ancestors in that we have revealed it and not retained it. One thing has enabled us to reveal these secrets and break the veil. It is the present state of the world in which the base opinions of the philosophers have spread across the nations, diffusing evil everywhere. We feared for the weaklings who have discarded

[31] *The Koran*, surat Al Waqia'ah, 10, 11.

the imitation of the prophets—Allah's blessing be upon them—and have sought instead to imitate the stupid and the foolish, who mistake such opinions for the true secrets, not to be imparted to any but those worthy of them.

A glimpse might induce them to become interested and lead to further interest, so we decided to offer them a glimpse of a part of one of these secrets in the hope that this may attract them to investigate and detach them from the other false way.

In these few pages we have covered the secrets with a thin veil or cover which can easily be broken by those who are worthy. Yet the veil will thicken for the unworthy and prevent them going further.

I ask of my brothers who know this subject to accept my apologies for what I have made—perhaps too easily—apparent and have not been sufficiently rigorous. If I did so, it was only because I rose to heights that the sight cannot reach and I wanted to show something of this by the use of words so that people might become interested and attracted to the way.

I ask for forgiveness and to lead us to the pure knowledge of Him; He is a generous provider. And peace be upon you, dear brother, whose help we have assumed. The mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you.

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